



# WASHINGTON STATE Department of Children, Youth, and Families



Report to the Washington State Legislature

## **OUTDOOR, NATURE-BASED EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE PILOT PROJECT**

*Substitute Senate Bill 5357, Chapter 162, Laws of 2017*

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*This report is dedicated to the memory of Erin Kenny, a leader in the U.S. Forest Kindergarten movement, and mentor to many outdoor preschool providers.*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Substitute Senate Bill (SSB) 5357, laws of 2017, required the Washington State Department of Early Learning, now the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF),<sup>1</sup> to establish a four-year pilot project to license “outdoor, nature-based early learning and child care programs,” otherwise known as “outdoor preschools.” As part of this project, DCYF and stakeholders in the outdoor preschool industry formed the Outdoor Preschool Advisory Group (OPAG) in August 2017 and began meeting regularly to maximize the inclusion of stakeholder input and expertise. The pilot project began with 14 different outdoor preschool programs across 22 sites throughout Washington, ready to participate as either an “implementer” or “observer” in a two-tiered pilot project structure.

In 2018, DCYF began establishing the pilot licensing standards for outdoor preschools by identifying which licensing standards would need to be waived, adapted, or replaced for an outdoor, nature-based program. DCYF engaged the OPAG to review the aligned center and family home early learning program rules (now Chapter 110-300 WAC). DCYF also extensively researched national and international best practices, health and safety standards for nature-based early childhood education, and outdoor program standards set for school-age children. DCYF has maintained the vast majority of the requirements for center-based early learning programs for application with outdoor preschools. Nonetheless, there are approximately 40 individual and substantive differences between center-based early learning and outdoor preschool program requirements that are necessary to ensure the same standards of health and safety for children can be met in different environments (see Exhibit A). The outdoor preschool pilot licensing standards address essential health and safety needs and promote children’s learning, development, and interaction with nature.

Providing a pilot license to outdoor preschool programs that have historically operated in license-exempt status required addressing a number of regulatory challenges. DCYF resolved these challenges by developing a contractual relationship with each outdoor preschool, requiring these “licensed” participants to adhere to general health and safety rules for child care (e.g., background checks and federal monitoring requirements) and to adhere to the outdoor preschool pilot licensing standards. DCYF will begin processing applications for the pilot license in March 2019.

There have also been challenging life events among pilot participants and these caused some changes in pilot project participation. DCYF used the opportunity to support the addition of two programs into the pilot, and support another center to start a new outdoor preschool program.

Since the summer of 2018, many of the implementing programs preparing for licensure have made improvements to their program policies, handbooks, and safety practices. DCYF is supporting outdoor preschool programs to do benefit-risk assessments of their regularly-used locations, and improve safety, hygiene, and emergency preparedness planning. The new outdoor preschool program at Squaxin Island Child Development Center has been particularly successful and has expanded their capacity for full-day care by providing an outdoor preschool classroom, including the provision of five ECEAP slots.

SSB 5357 also charged DCYF with developing a pathway for outdoor preschools to participate in Early Achievers, the state quality rating and improvement system (QRIS). DCYF has begun to collect various quality rating tools to assess them for their suitability to outdoor preschools. This work may identify quality indicators that are not limited only to outdoor preschools, but that can be incorporated into the statewide QRIS for all program types.

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<sup>1</sup> For simplification, the agency tasked with conducting this pilot will always be referred in this report as DCYF.

## INTRODUCTION

Substitute Senate Bill (SSB) 5357, laws of 2017, required the Washington State Department of Early Learning, now the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), to establish a four-year pilot project to license “outdoor, nature-based early learning and child care programs,” otherwise known as “outdoor preschools.”

This report covers DCYF’s efforts since the last report delivered to the legislature in **January 2018**, and details DCYF’s plans for the remainder of the pilot project.



### LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND AND REQUIREMENTS OVERVIEW

At the time of the bill’s passage, the legislature found that more than 40 outdoor preschools were operating in Washington, but because these programs were unlicensed they could not provide full-day care. The legislature also found that these part-day programs were in high demand and many had waitlists. Further, because these programs were unlicensed, they were unable to serve families who would otherwise be eligible for high-quality early learning opportunities through the state’s working connections child care (WCCC) program and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP).

The goal in creating this pilot project was to “expand access to affordable, high-quality early learning programs, and to further investigate the benefits of outdoor, nature-based classrooms for Washington’s children and families” (SSB 5357, Section 1).

To accomplish this goal, the legislature required DCYF to establish a pilot project to license outdoor preschools, which began on August 31, 2017, and is scheduled to conclude on June 30, 2021. DCYF must adopt rules to implement the pilot project and may waive or adapt licensing requirements as needed to allow for outdoor preschool classrooms. DCYF must also explore options for outdoor preschools’ participation in Early Achievers, and convene an advisory group of outdoor, nature-based early learning practitioners.

DCYF must provide brief, annual status reports, which began on January 15, 2018, that describe the implementation of the pilot project, and provide a full report on findings from the pilot project by November 30, 2020. This is the second annual report.

## REVIEW OF PAST PROGRESS

### AUGUST 2017 – JANUARY 2018

When SSB 5357 was signed into law, DCYF began coordinating the pilot project both internally and with stakeholders in the outdoor preschool industry. DCYF hired a pilot program manager with a 14-year history in child care licensing, and a program specialist with a background in early childhood policy development, program evaluation, and nature-based early childhood education.

DCYF and stakeholders in the outdoor preschool industry formed the Outdoor Preschool Advisory Group (OPAG) in August 2017 and began meeting regularly. A pilot project structure was established to maximize the inclusion of stakeholder input and expertise, resulting in a two-tiered cohort participation structure. “Implementers” work with the department to implement the outdoor preschool pilot standards under a “pilot license” and receive the related opportunities, such as accepting child care subsidies and participating in Early Achievers. “Observers” provide



comparison data until such time as they wish to apply for a pilot license. Directors of both the implementer and observer cohort programs participate in the OPAG and provide program data to help establish appropriate licensing requirements and advise the department in meeting the goals of the pilot project.

Recruitment of existing programs in the outdoor preschool industry shows that outdoor preschool programs operate with a variety of organizational structures and program types. Participating programs include a mix of rural, urban, and suburban locations selected to provide more family choice (see Appendices A and B). These programs also include a mix of non-profit or for-profit organizations, programs located at the University of Washington campus, programs that work in conjunction with Seattle Parks and Recreation, and programs that operate in public parks throughout the state. The pilot project also includes the participation of a federally recognized Indian tribe operating a licensed child care center. Although the majority of outdoor preschool programs participating in the pilot have historically been exempt from licensing, licensed child care centers can also provide an outdoor preschool program. These classrooms are conducted in natural areas adjacent to the licensed child care structures. See Appendix C for updated participant testimonials for 2018.



## PROGRESS MADE IN 2018

### JANUARY 2018 – JANUARY 2019

#### *Developing the Outdoor Preschool Pilot Standards*

To date, the greatest challenge and opportunity for the outdoor preschool pilot has been establishing the pilot licensing standards for outdoor, nature-based early childhood programming. These standards were developed specifically for operating outdoor preschool programs. Although outdoor programming for school-age children is prevalent throughout the country, there is no industry standard for licensing outdoor programs that serve preschool-age children.

DCYF began the process of establishing licensing standards by identifying which licensing requirements would need to be waived, adapted, or replaced for an outdoor, nature-based program. DCYF engaged the OPAG to review the aligned center-based and family home early learning program rules (now [Chapter 110-300 WAC](#)), which were developed concurrently during the statewide Negotiated Rule-Making process. Although Chapter 110-300 WAC will not take effect until August 1, 2019, aligning outdoor preschool standards with this chapter ensures a consistent focus on health and safety across all child care settings at the conclusion of the pilot project. This approach also incorporates guidance from *Caring for Our Children*<sup>2</sup> and input from stakeholders throughout Washington.

DCYF staff also extensively researched national and international best practices, health and safety standards for nature-based early childhood education, and outdoor program standards set by existing organizations in the U.S. for school-age children. This process involved an assessment and integration of multiple sources of quality information, as well as guidance from

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<sup>2</sup> <http://nrckids.org/CFOC>

national and international experts.<sup>3</sup> DCYF incorporated the following resources to develop the outdoor preschool pilot standards:

- Policies and protocols from existing programs such as Outward Bound, Girl Scouts, and 4H Adventure Education.
- Guidelines from agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service, Leave-No-Trace, Washington State Department of Health, and Washington State Department of Agriculture.
- Best practice resources such as the North American Association of Environmental Education's *Guidelines for Excellence: Early Childhood Environmental Education*; David Sobel's *Nature Preschools and Forest Kindergartens: The Handbook for Outdoor Learning*; and the University of Washington Cultivate Learning's *Nurturing Early Learning: Research to Support Young Children's Learning in the Outdoors*.



International partnerships have also been influential in the establishment of licensing standards for outdoor preschools in Washington. The University of Washington's partnership with Queen Maud University in Norway has been particularly influential in providing a comparative program model and expertise in supporting children's risky play through benefit-risk assessment.

Additionally, DCYF has developed a partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Education and Forest Schools in Canada to learn about Forest School Certification and regional, public-private partnerships in licensing. In August 2018, the outdoor preschool program specialist also attended and presented at the 2018 International Nature-Based Early Learning Conference in Chicago, Illinois.

*"So-far, the benefits have been getting to know and collaborate with other nature-based preschools; come up with ideas around safety, student to teacher ratios, and risk assessment; and teacher training as a group. I have learned a lot through the training provided, especially around equity and inclusivity. I have enjoyed working with DCYF and learning about licensing standards, and we have added a lot of new policies in working with our families about how to support them and their children while at nature school, especially when things are challenging (such as behaviors, etc.)."*

– Outdoor Preschool Director

### *The Outdoor Preschool Pilot Standards*

The outdoor preschool pilot standards are a comprehensive set of standards used to ensure the health and safety of children in outdoor preschools. These standards were developed specifically for operating outdoor preschool programs. Outdoor preschools operate in a very similar manner to center-based early learning programs, albeit out in nature, and the outdoor preschool pilot standards are based primarily on the licensing rules (WAC) for center-based early learning programs (Exhibit A).

DCYF has applied a vast majority of the center-based early learning program rules to outdoor preschools participating in the pilot. However, to address the different types of hazards presented by an outdoor, nature-based program, there are approximately 40 additional or alternative standards designed to meet the same health and safety expectations as center-based early learning programs. Some standards for outdoor preschools are more stringent,

<sup>3</sup> Many thanks to Scott Vanderway, Director of 4H Adventure Education in WA; Christy Merrick, Specialist Projects Advisor at Natural Start Alliance (NAAEE); staff at the Ontario Ministry of Education, National Outdoor Leadership School, Outward Bound, and Girl Scouts organizations; and to the community of experts at the International Association for Nature Pedagogy.

such as ratio and group size, and some standards have been waived entirely, such as the requirements related to owning and managing an indoor structure. Wherever DCYF created these additional or alternative standards for outdoor preschools, that decision is supported with research and guidance from experts and other agencies. The outdoor preschool pilot standards were reviewed by the Washington State Office of the Attorney General, and additional recommendations to ensure child safety were incorporated.

Outdoor preschool programs often operate in public parks, and although these spaces are managed for public safety, it is the responsibility of the outdoor preschool provider to ensure child safety and education. The key differences between center-based early learning program rules and the outdoor preschool pilot standards are in the following areas:

- **Ratio and Group Size.** Outdoor preschools must have a 1:6 staff to child ratio, with a maximum group size of 16. For comparison, center-based early learning programs have a ratio of 1:10 with a maximum group size of 20. This difference ensures appropriate active supervision of children in the outdoor preschool environment.
- **Benefit-Risk Assessments.** Outdoor preschool providers must complete a benefit-risk assessment and create a risk management plan for all regularly used locations and nature-based activities (e.g., climbing natural features, foraging, and encountering wildlife). Activities or locations with increased risk must have policies and procedures to mitigate that risk, and these must be approved by DCYF.
- **Teacher Qualification in Environmental or Outdoor Education.** Outdoor preschool program directors or supervising staff must have a background and/or training in environmental or outdoor education in addition to the same early childhood certificate requirements as center-based early learning programs. This qualification will support children's safety in the natural environment, as well as optimize their learning with a nature-based curriculum.
- **Curriculum Requirements.** Outdoor preschools must utilize developmentally appropriate techniques to teach children about boundaries and self-regulation for outdoor play. Instead of having fences, teachers use visual cues, such as cones, and review the boundaries with children. Outdoor preschools must also provide a nature-based curriculum, utilizing natural materials and processes to enhance children's learning. The outdoor preschool pilot also requires programs to incorporate a tribally-approved curriculum, such as the Since Time Immemorial early learning curriculum, in the spirit of SB 5433.<sup>4</sup>
- **Weather-Related Policies and Emergency Procedures.** Outdoor preschools operate outside every day and must ensure that children have the proper clothing and gear to remain healthy and safe, and they must have a safe building available for emergencies. Programs must partner with parents to understand the importance of providing proper clothing and must support children who do not have such clothing. Programs must also have policies and procedures for closures due to weather (such as poor air quality or dangerous storms) and staff must be trained in emergency procedures for sudden changes in weather.



<sup>4</sup> SB 5433 requires the inclusion of tribal sovereignty curriculum be taught in all schools, and the early learning curriculum was approved by the Tribal Leaders Congress (TLC) on Education. For more information see <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/tribal-relations/since-time-immemorial>



## OUTDOOR PRESCHOOL PILOT PROJECT

- **Hygiene.** Outdoor preschool providers must follow alternative procedures to ensure the same level of hygiene as required in other licensed early learning programs. For example, outdoor preschools may use sanitizing wipes to clean public toilets before children's use, and they may provide hand wipes with alcohol to sufficiently wash children's hands before eating. Each of these alternative procedures is aligned with guidance from a DCYF health specialist.
- **Outdoor, Nature-Based Specific Standards.** Standards are also developed for the following:
  - Waterless toileting standards, such as port-a-loos or composting toilets, which are based on guidance from the Washington State Department of Health.
  - Egg collection activities, storage, and serving standards, which are based on guidance from the Washington State Department of Agriculture.
  - Campfire areas and activities, including supervision and safety procedures, which are based on guidance from the U.S. Forest Service and aligned with practices used by other outdoor education organizations or nature-based early learning programs in other countries.<sup>5</sup>



The outdoor preschool pilot licensing standards address concerns about health and safety, and they also support and promote children's healthy development and encourage interaction with nature. The outdoor preschool pilot will evaluate these practices once they are implemented by the participating programs. The regulatory standards developed by the end of this pilot project could lay the foundation for quality, outdoor early childhood environmental education for Washington state and programs around the nation.

*"Participating in the Outdoor Preschool Pilot has been an incredibly informative, collaborative, and enriching experience thus far. The greatest benefits have been: working with dedicated, informed, intelligent, and impassioned educators and DCYF staff; having the opportunity to share my knowledge and experience, and lend a voice in creating licensing standards for outdoor preschools in Washington state that will reflect the diversity of quality education programs offered throughout the state and ensure the safety of those we serve, as well as ourselves and our employees; building a strong partnership with DCYF that will benefit both outdoor preschool staff and agency staff going forward. Some challenges have been in the form of making sure standards do actually encompass the diversity of outdoor preschool programs and that the integrity of those programs will be preserved through this licensing process, but we have worked together to meet these challenges."*

– Outdoor Preschool Director

### *Providing an Outdoor Preschool Pilot License*

RCW 43.216.740(2) (SB 5357) requires DCYF to adopt rules to implement the pilot project including the ability to waive or adapt child care licensing requirements to allow outdoor classrooms to operate. DCYF is in the process of promulgating rules to administer the pilot project and is on schedule to have these rules in effect by March 2019. By August 2019, DCYF plans to issue programs a provisional outdoor preschool license (an "outdoor preschool pilot

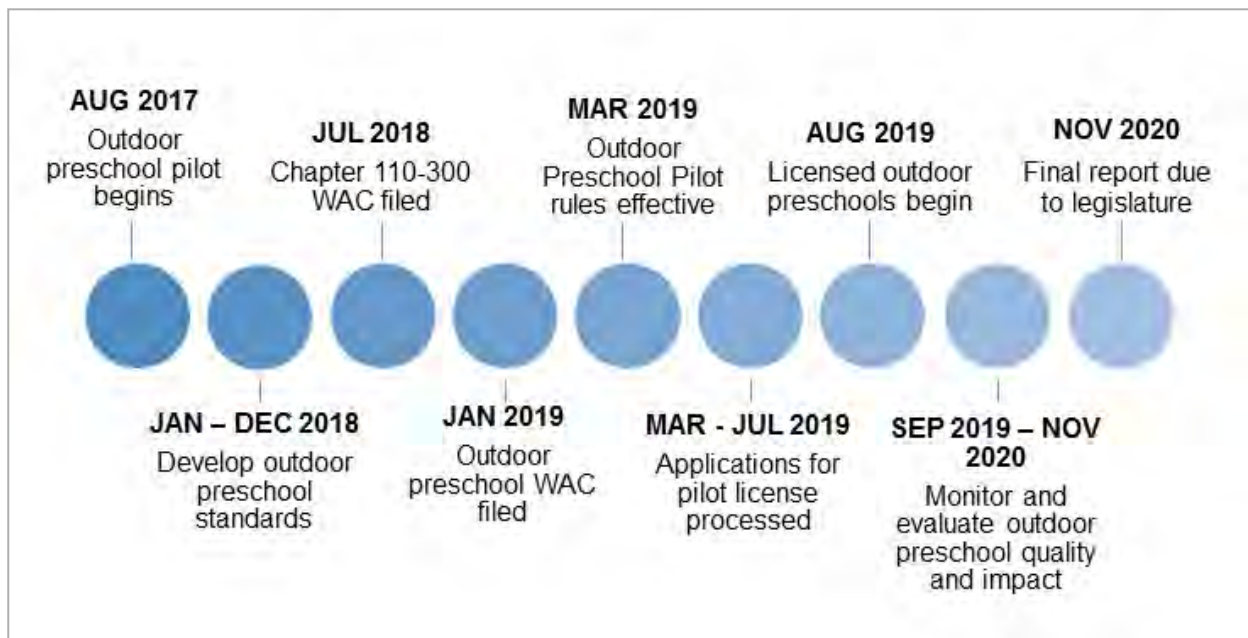
<sup>5</sup> Resources include the guidelines from Forest Schools Canada, South Australia Department of Education and Child Development, 4H Adventure Education, American Camp Association, and Girl Scouts.



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license”). The outdoor preschool pilot license will allow outdoor programs to operate their outdoor classrooms beyond four hours per day, expanding service to more children and families, and allow subsidy payment for income-eligible families.

Between March and August 2019, DCYF will accept applications from programs that wish to obtain an outdoor preschool pilot license to begin the 2019 – 2020 academic year. The department will also provide technical assistance to programs considering an expansion of their outdoor classroom hours or enrollment for future years. Once a program has obtained an outdoor preschool pilot license and signed an Outdoor Classroom Agreement with DCYF, that program may begin expanding its outdoor preschool services. The Outdoor Classroom Agreement requires the program to comply fully with DCYF oversight during the pilot project, including adherence to the rigorous health and safety requirements detailed in the outdoor preschool pilot standards.



For the purpose of ensuring that outdoor preschools can serve families who are receiving subsidy supports through Working Connections Child Care (WCCC), DCYF determined that the outdoor preschools participating in the pilot will be classified as center-based early learning programs and receive the center reimbursement rate. This determination considers that outdoor preschools operate outside of an individual's home, require at least two staff to supervise children, and can enroll more than 12 children.

It also takes into account the education requirements for staff which were modeled off of center-based early learning regulations, and include additional specialty training or experience in environmental education. For example, at least one staff-person in a leadership position at an outdoor preschool (director, assistant director, or program supervisor) is required to have training or experience in environmental education. Additionally, lead teachers are also required to have 2 years experience in the specialization of nature-based early childhood education, unless the program supervisor is a 15 min walk or ride to the site. Depending on the program site, staff may also need additional training as lifeguards or in wilderness first aid. This specialist training is critical for prioritizing environmental safety, behavior management, and keeping children engaged in outdoor settings. See Exhibit A for the full pilot standards.

The outdoor preschool pilot standards were also designed to comply with the requirements of Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) (45 CFR part 98), and DCYF included the outdoor preschool pilot project in the state CCDF plan.

### *Adjusting Participation in the Outdoor Preschool Pilot*

Throughout the 2018 year, the outdoor preschool community experienced some great changes. Erin Kenny, co-founder of Cedarsong Nature School and a leader of the U.S. Forest Kindergarten movement, lost her battle with cancer and passed away in the fall. Many of the outdoor preschool stakeholders participating in the OPAG and pilot project were mentored by Erin, and her loss was keenly felt. There were also changes in leadership, staffing, and even several births within the outdoor preschool community.

These life events caused some changes in pilot project participation,<sup>6</sup> and allowed DCYF the opportunity to support two additional programs to join the pilot, and supported one provider to start a new outdoor preschool program, effectively shifting from the observer to implementer cohort. These new programs have ensured a continued broad representation from around the state (see Appendix C for participant testimonials).



- The Madrona Nature School in Bellingham, Wash. (pictured at right) is a licensed center-based early learning program that has been able to expand their capacity and serve more children with an outdoor preschool program.
- Play Frontier is a nature-based program opening in Carson, Wash., at the southernmost border of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest.
- The Squaxin Island Child Development Center in Shelton, Wash., began an outdoor preschool program component to its licensed child care center.

The pilot project now includes 12 outdoor preschool programs, across 22 separate sites throughout Washington.<sup>7</sup> Of those, eight sites are currently participating as implementer programs. However, the opportunity is available for observer cohort programs to apply for a pilot license for the 2019 – 2020 school year. There is also continued interest in the pilot from other programs in the nature-based preschool community, and as DCYF issues pilot licenses to the programs already participating, there will be additional opportunities to expand the pilot project.

*“We have opened a whole new world of learning opportunities for children to explore beyond the four walls of the classroom. We were also fortunate to receive five ECEAP funded slots included in the outdoor program.”*

– Squaxin Island Child Development Center

### *Outdoor Preschool Participation in Early Achievers*

As part of the outdoor preschool pilot, DCYF is tasked with exploring options for developing a QRIS for outdoor preschools. Options include adapting Early Achievers to assess quality in outdoor learning environments, and adapting or replacing the Early Achievers indoor environmental rating scale.

<sup>6</sup> Cedarsong will not be operating after the 2018-2019 school year; Orcas Island Forest School did not operate in 2018-2019 due to staffing; KinderGarden in the Garden and Fremont Community School no longer participate in the pilot, however Fremont Community School has decided to apply for a regular child care license, instead; and Fiddleheads and the Outdoor Nature School have shifted to the observer cohort due to unrelated staffing capacity issues.

<sup>7</sup> Two outdoor preschool programs have multiple sites. Tiny Trees has nine sites, three of which are participating in the Implementer cohort, and the Washington Outdoor School has two sites. See Appendix A and Appendix B for a visual representation of the pilot project cohorts.

DCYF has begun to collect various quality rating tools to assess them for their suitability to outdoor preschools. Early Achievers currently uses the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale - Revised Edition (ECERS-R) and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), both of which assume the use of an indoor early learning environment. In 2020, DCYF will retire the ECERS-R and CLASS tools and begin using the Environment Rating Scale - 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (ECERS-3) tools in Early Achievers data collection. In partnership with the University of Washington's Cultivate Learning,<sup>8</sup> DCYF will begin testing the ECERS-3 tool, as well as alternative measures, with the pilot participants in 2019.

Frameworks for quality in early childhood environmental education and high-quality center-based early childhood outdoor learning environments are also being explored for potential indicators that support outdoor preschool participation in the QRIS. This work may identify indicators of quality that are not limited to outdoor preschools, but that can be incorporated into the statewide QRIS for all program types.

DCYF and the University of Washington (UW) have continued to collaborate to ensure a research-based approach to establishing outdoor preschool licensing standards and quality progression. Outdoor, nature-based learning is shown to improve child development outcomes and provide quality early learning opportunities. DCYF and UW have been disseminating such lessons about quality from outdoor preschool programs and nature-based pedagogy. DCYF staff also participated in steering committees for UW teacher training opportunities.

In July 2018, UW's Cultivate Learning and doctoral students at UW developed a series of research briefs that highlight the benefits of outdoor, nature-based learning opportunities to support educators in making improvements to their practice.<sup>9</sup> For example, early learning providers are encouraged to increase children's access to nature and opportunities for active, outdoor play because the health and development outcomes of outdoor play include:



- **Physical Benefits.** Outdoor play provides more vigorous, varied, and sustained play; improves gross and fine motor development, including bone health, balance, coordination, endurance, spatial awareness, core strength, and posture; strengthens immune systems; and promotes lifelong engagement in physical activity.
- **Cognitive Benefits.** Outdoor, nature-based play supports improved executive functioning and self-regulation abilities; increases observation and problem-solving skills; increases attention and focus; and challenging play supports children's resilience, independence, and self-confidence.
- **Social and Emotional Benefits.** Nature-based play supports children's development of empathy for the natural world and an emotional connection to special places, laying the foundation for environmentally-responsible attitudes and behaviors and reduced stress, anxiety, and depression.

In August 2018, UW's Cultivate Learning and DCYF held an Early Achievers Institute on outdoor, nature-based education at Islandwood, an environmental learning center on Bainbridge Island. Early Achievers Institutes are an opportunity for team building, community connections, and earning STARS and Clock hours in which all Early Achievers participants are invited to attend. OPAG members presented at the Institute, and their workshops included topics on risk

<sup>8</sup> Cultivate Learning is responsible for assessing program quality in the Early Achievers program.

<sup>9</sup> See Exhibit B: Cultivate Learning's *Nurturing Early Learning: Research to Support Young Children's Learning in the Outdoors*



management in natural environments, equity in outdoor access, and using nature to support a social-emotional curriculum.

## INITIAL RESULTS AND SUCCESS STORIES

The purpose of the outdoor preschool pilot is to expand opportunities for Washington’s children and families to access high-quality preschool options, and this is accomplished in a variety of ways by outdoor preschool programs participating in the pilot. Some programs have developed partnerships to support families in need of access to financial support, such as the Tiny Trees partnership with the Seattle Pathways Preschool program, and other programs are providing exceptional and exemplary curriculum for children. The development of the outdoor preschool pilot licensing standards has also supported participating programs to make informed staffing and enrollment decisions, as well as improve the quality of health and safety by establishing the industry standards for policies and practices.

Since the summer of 2018, many of the implementer cohort programs preparing for licensure have made improvements to their program policies, handbooks, and safety practices. DCYF is supporting programs to do benefit-risk assessments of their regularly-used locations, and the OPAG decided to support the work of the Olympic Nature Experience and adopt their model of risk assessment and management planning.<sup>10</sup> Other improved practices include using visual aids, such as cones or colored ribbons, to help children understand the boundaries of their play, improving handwashing and food hygiene practices, and developing comprehensive emergency plans for extreme weather conditions.

The development of a new outdoor preschool program at the Squaxin Island Child Development Center (CDC) is a great example of the potential benefits for children and families. The tribal program began participating in the outdoor preschool pilot in the observer cohort and had a practice of bringing each of their 112 enrolled children on field trips to the natural area “beyond the fence” on a regular basis. In the fall of 2018, DCYF worked with Squaxin Island CDC to increase their capacity, and approve part of the natural area for a permanently located outdoor classroom. This will allow them to increase their enrollment by 12-16 children, and offer full-day care to those enrolled by combining the outdoor preschool and center-based early learning programs. Additionally, five ECEAP slots were provided to the outdoor preschool classroom. Squaxin Island CDC is a licensed child care center that already participates in Early Achievers and provides ECEAP seats in other classes.



*To imagine the Squaxin Island CDC’s outdoor classroom, picture this: you walk from the parking lot into the forest through a wide path under cedar and fir trees. As you reach a clearing by old growth trees, there is child-sized furniture made out of logs, a reading and gathering circle under a roof made of branches and sticks, and areas for outdoor painting, climbing, and dramatic play spread throughout the ferns. The children have plenty of room to move and they are able to engage in small learning activities or in large, active play all at once. The teachers notice what a difference this environment makes for the children. They are seemingly more “polite” and helpful to their friends. The differences in behavior are so stark that the teachers started tracking behavioral incidents between children in the outdoor classroom, versus the incidents occurring when the children are inside.*

<sup>10</sup> Olympic Nature Experience director Sarah Salazar-Tipton presented on benefit-risk assessments and daily safety planning at the Early Achievers Institute in August 2018. Although there are international models of benefit-risk assessment, the format developed and provided by ONE better suits the stated aims of the outdoor preschool pilot standards.

The community is very excited about this program and placed an article in the tribal newspaper celebrating this opportunity (see Appendix D). Their morning program was immediately fully enrolled, and the long waitlist inspired Squaxin Island CDC to offer an afternoon class beginning in January 2019.

Within the first month of the program, Squaxin Island CDC teachers tracked incidents of challenging behavior between children.<sup>11</sup> They found there were seven incidents when children were indoors or in the fenced playground, but there were no incidents for the same group of children in the outdoor preschool classroom. There were also six accidents that caused injury in the indoor or playground spaces, compared with only one injury occurring in the outdoor classroom space. This trend continued into the second month of programming, and in the words of the Squaxin Island CDC Director, “it is interesting that the outdoor kids still have some problems while indoors, which only amplifies the basis that kids outside are more engaged and less likely to have issues.”

The positive effects of outdoor programs on children’s behavior are echoed by many other programs. Erin Kenny’s program at Cedarsong Nature School, although closing after this school year due to her passing, provides therapeutic nature immersion as a basis for their daily program:

*We see many instances of success in our outdoor environment through children’s authentic interaction with nature and with each other as they are guided to deal with their unique challenges. As a program of inclusion, Cedarsong Nature School accepts children diagnosed with high-functioning autism, sensory processing disorder, and/or ADHD into all of our regular classes and camps. All Cedarsong Nature School programs are non-competitive and designed to foster group bonding, self-empowerment, and positive social integration.*

The curriculum provided by participating pilot programs is also high-quality and diverse. For example, Tiny Trees, through their partnership with Seattle Preschool Pathways, implements the High Scope curriculum,<sup>12</sup> which promotes children’s development and provides lasting benefits into adulthood. Squaxin Island CDC uses the Creative Curriculum,<sup>13</sup> which is also research-based and aligned with Teaching Strategies Gold, the child assessment tool used by the ECEAP program. Most outdoor preschool programs also utilize an emergent curriculum design, which is a way of facilitating meaningful learning experiences that are responsive to children’s current interests and to changes in the natural environment.

Of great benefit to children and to Washington is that outdoor preschools are leading the way in providing environmental education for preschool children<sup>14</sup> in addition to meeting the educational goals of licensed child care. For example, Nurture in Nature uses the Growing Up Wild curriculum,<sup>15</sup> which was developed by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to support children’s development of environmental literacy. ACORNS NW provides an adaptive blend of emergent learning and wilderness mentoring methods. Children’s curiosity guides creation of the curriculum and opportunities to study the plant life cycle and



<sup>11</sup> Incidents were defined by the Squaxin Island CDC teachers as “fighting, hitting, biting, pushing, etc. and requiring teacher intervention”.

<sup>12</sup> <https://highscope.org/preschool>

<sup>13</sup> <https://teachingstrategies.com/solutions/teach/preschool/>

<sup>14</sup> See Exhibit C: Guidelines for Excellence - Early Childhood Environmental Education Programs

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.fishwildlife.org/projectwild/project-wild>

how the seasons affect food, harvesting, and survival help develop nature fluency. Such an approach is also utilized by Olympic Nature Experience, which provides extensive safety training and manuals for staff and families that highlight the connection between respectful, safe practices and children's environmental education outcomes.

From the Olympic Nature Experience's Edible Plants Handbook:

*At Olympic Nature Experience, we teach students that each plant is its own unique living organism, not belonging to anyone or anything else. With this mindset, we can approach wild harvesting with respect and appreciation of the plant and its impact on its neighbors and its environment. If we take all the berries of one bush, the bush will have no seeds left to create more bushes and the animals will have less food to share... Just as we teach children to say please and thank you at the dinner table, and to be mindful of how much food is left for everyone, recognizing each plant has a function and purpose beyond our needs, and being grateful for its use to us, helps us develop an attitude of conservation and appreciation.*

## GOALS AND NEXT STEPS FOR 2019

In 2019, DCYF will license implementer cohort programs, begin monitoring for compliance with the pilot licensing standards, and continue providing technical assistance to help program participants meet these standards. DCYF will begin accepting applications in March 2019, and issuing pilot licenses to ensure children are enrolled in licensed outdoor preschool for the 2019 – 2020 school year.

DCYF will continue to recruit programs for the pilot to ensure a mix of rural, urban, and suburban locations, and will give priority to areas with few or limited early learning programs, areas where early learning programs are near or at full capacity, and areas where an outdoor early learning program would provide more family choice. Although programs operating in the mountains and in eastern Washington are participating as observer cohort programs, DCYF will increase recruitment efforts in these regions to promote statewide implementation.

Additional recruitment began in January 2019 so more programs can apply for outdoor preschool pilot licenses in March 2019. DCYF outdoor preschool pilot staff are working with Tleena Ives, DCYF Director of Tribal Relations, providing updates to the Indian Policy Early Learning committee, and will continue to support additional tribal participation in the pilot.

### Key Next Steps for DCYF Include:

- Supporting outdoor preschool programs to offer full-day care, providing equitable access to all families who choose outdoor programs for their children.
- Supporting regular licensed child care programs to use an outdoor preschool program in the morning and afternoon to expand capacity and enrollment at high-quality programs.
- Engaging with families to further understand and identify the benefits and challenges of enrollment in outdoor, nature-based preschool programs.
- Continuing collaboration with stakeholders in nature-based education and early childhood teacher preparation programs to further define teacher competencies specific to working in an outdoor, nature-based preschool.
- Analyzing the backgrounds of current staff in participating programs, and drawing from research on teacher preparation pathways in the U.S. and abroad.

This work may also inform DCYF's exploration of how outdoor preschools can participate in Early Achievers. DCYF is required to submit its next status report to the Legislature on January 15, 2020, and the final report on findings from the pilot is due November 30, 2020.



## APPENDIX A

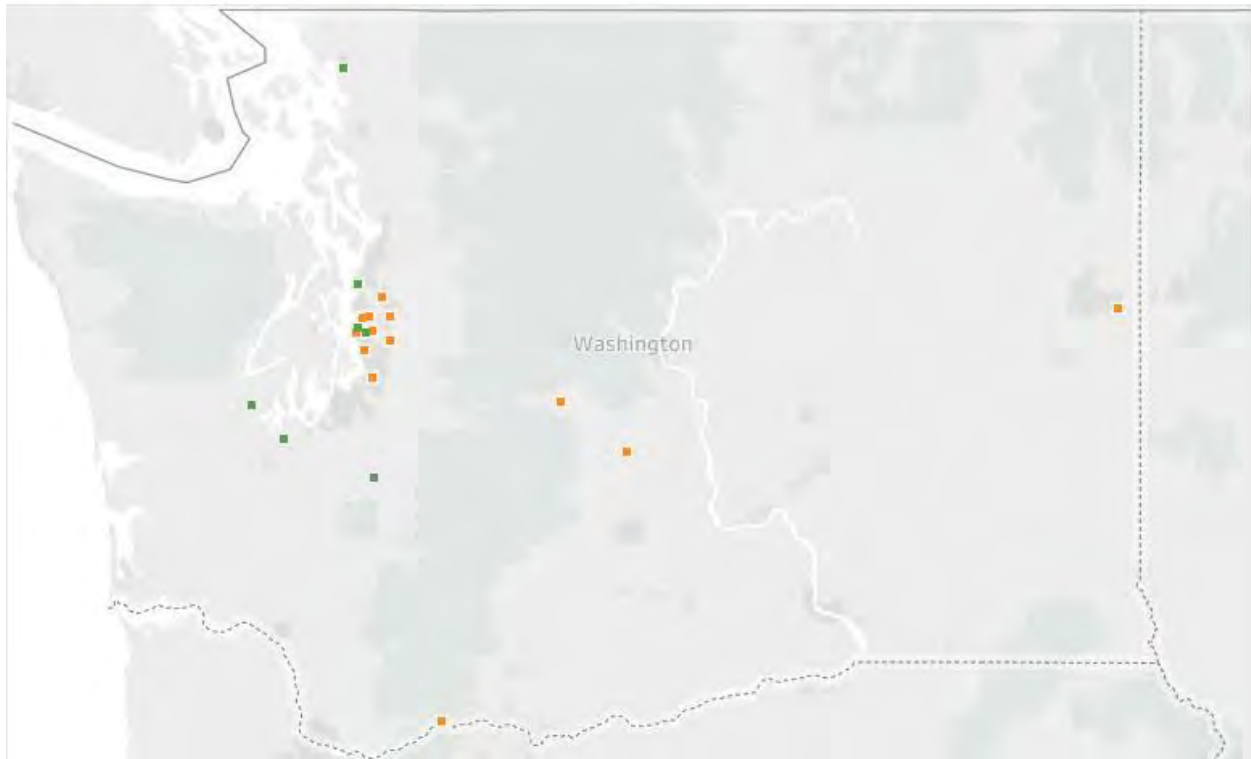
Program Name and Location	Pilot Cohort	Program Type and Model*	Number of Children served 2018 - 2019	Does the program provide independent financial assistance to families?
<b>ACORNS NW</b> Olympia, WA	Implementer	Non-profit organization, operating a non-permanent program in a public park.	29	Yes. There is a sliding scale of costs to self-identified families, and scholarships provided to promote racial equity.
<b>Fiddleheads</b> Seattle, WA	Observer	UW Arboretum – affiliated program, providing a permanently located outdoor classroom program entirely outdoors.	60	Yes. Seven families are receiving financial aid for the 2018-19 school year. We ask families to fill out our financial aid form and aid is awarded based on need using the same metric as the Seattle Public School system uses for free and reduced lunch.
<b>Into the Forest</b> Spokane, WA	Observer	Nature-based program at a licensed childcare center.	23	No.
<b>Madrona Nature School,</b> Bellingham, WA	Implementer	Non-profit organization, operating a licensed childcare center with a non-permanent outdoor preschool program in a public park.	25	No.
<b>Nurture in Nature Preschool</b> Tacoma, WA	Observer	Tacoma Nature Center – affiliated program, providing a permanently located outdoor classroom program entirely outdoor.	64	Yes. When fundraising efforts are successful and available.
<b>Owl's Hollow: Olympic Nature Experience</b> Sequim, WA	Implementer	Non-profit organization, providing a non-permanent, roaming outdoor preschool program in a public park.	38	Yes. Twelve families receive financial assistance, as we raise money privately through donations and foundation grants.
<b>Play Frontier</b> Carson, WA	Implementer	Non-profit organization, applying for a center childcare license and to operate a non-permanent, roaming outdoor preschool program.	N/A	N/A

<b>Polliwog Preschool: Mercer Slough EEC</b> Bellevue, WA	Observer	Mercer Slough EEC – affiliated program, providing a nature-based outdoor preschool program with an indoor facility.	37	No. We strive to keep our costs low for all families, but don't currently offer any additional financial assistance. We hope to offer 1-2 full scholarship spaces next year.
<b>Roots &amp; Sky Nature School</b> Seattle, WA	Observer	Individual currently operating Nanny in Nature, a non-permanent, roaming program in a public park.	8	No.
<b>Sapling &amp; Cedars: Squaxin Island CDC</b> Shelton, WA	Implementer	Squaxin Island Tribal childcare center, providing an outdoor preschool program with a permanently located outdoor classroom.	24	Yes. If our families are tribal the tribe pays their tuition. Currently this would be 22 of the 24 families. Of our 12 morning program seats, 5 are ECEAP slots.
<b>Tiny Trees</b> Various Locations in King County, WA	Implementer (3) and Observer (6)	Non-profit organization, providing permanently located outdoor classroom programs at various public parks.	272	Yes. 138 families receive Financial Assistance. Of those, 43 are receiving aid through the Seattle Preschool Program. The remainder, 95 families, have self-identified as needing assistance and been granted the Financial Assistance cost for their location. This is a fixed amount that is set in conjunction with our tuition rates.
<b>Washington Outdoor School,</b> Roslyn and Ellensburg, WA	Observer (2)	Non-profit organization, providing non-permanent, roaming outdoor preschool program in public parks.	34	(not submitted)
<b>Total</b>	12 agencies, 22 sites	-	551 +	-

\* Outdoor preschool programs can be offered by a variety of organizational types and in a variety of program models, while still meeting the requirements of operating an outdoor, nature based program for 50% or more of the daily program. Outdoor preschool programs may be offered by non-profit or for-profit childcare agency, or be associated with a nature center or other organization. Outdoor preschools may be offered as part of a licensed childcare center's daily program, or they may operate entirely outdoors in a public park or on private land. Outdoor preschools may also have a permanently located outdoor classroom, or they may operate as a non-permanent, roaming or backpack program. Permanently located outdoor classrooms are outdoor areas that have been modified to support an early learning program, such as with child size furniture. Non-permanent outdoor classes, also called roaming or backpack programs because of their low impact, still have a regular meeting space and areas that are commonly used, but teachers and children bring all required resources with them as they engage with the natural environment.

## APPENDIX B

### Outdoor Preschool Pilot Locations



Map based on Longitude (generated) and Latitude (generated). Color shows details about Cohort Status. Details are shown for Zip code. The view is filtered on Latitude (generated) and Inclusions (Cohort Status, Zip code). The Latitude (generated) filter keeps non-Null values only. The Inclusions (Cohort Status, Zip code) filter keeps 21 members.

Cohort Status  
■ Implementer  
■ Observer



## APPENDIX C

### Outdoor Preschool Pilot Participant Testimonials

**ACORNS NW (various locations in Olympia, WA area).** A Cooperative Outdoor Revolutionary Nature School Northwest (ACORNS NW) is a non-profit program currently in the process of becoming a 501(c)(3). We serve a total of 33 children (including eight children with special needs), ages 2 to 5 years old, and 30 families. We are a nature- and earth-based experiential learning program. We seek to help nurture and restore connection to the natural world through exploration, play, observation, and community. It is our hope that prioritizing a connection to nature and building a relationship in the ways we learn, grow, teach, share, and live, that we will create more inclusive and sustainable futures for all beings. ACORNS NW Forest School was co-founded in November 2015 as a homeschool enrichment program by two queer women, Heather McKenna and Kendra Obom. Our hope and vision is to create accessible nature connection programming for the Olympia and Thurston County community. For the past two years, Ms. McKenna and Obom have acted as the directors on a mostly volunteer basis with the hope of providing affordable programming and meaningful employment within their community. In 2016, Melissa Fassbender and Allan Davis helped found the preschool program, which has grown into ACORNS NW most active program. The ACORNS NW community seeks cooperative and justice-based approaches to both social and environmental issues, and continues to grow its capacity to deliver alternative education and nature-based community for all ages.

**Cedarsong Nature School (Vashon Island, WA).** (DCYF note: Cedarsong's Forest Kindergarten will close after the 2018-2019 school year due to the passing of Director Erin Kenny. Included is the participant testimonial from last year's report). This program is a 501(c)(3), non-profit entity and currently serves 25 families with enrolled children from two to six years old. An additional ten families are currently on the waitlist, mostly for two year old children. In addition, each class accommodates up to two children diagnosed with high functioning autism, ADHD, or SPD. Cedarsong Forest Kindergarten is 100% outdoors for four hours no matter what the weather, there is no indoor space on the Cedarsong campus. The most distinguishing feature is that we are committed to unstructured flow learning for the entire time the children are with us. There is no schedule, no agenda, no pre-set activities, and no direct teacher instruction. We use inquiry-based teaching to draw out children's problem-solving. We emphasize compassion, respect, and mindfulness towards each other and towards the natural world. We are also a physical therapy and sensory integration program because these kids thrive with the lack of transitions at our school. With licensing, we could serve families that need all-day coverage and families who need financial assistance. We already provide a number of scholarships through our fundraising, but the need keeps increasing and we are having a hard time keeping up with requests.

**Fiddleheads Forest School (University of Washington, Seattle, WA).** Fiddleheads Forest School was established at the Washington Park Arboretum, a public park in the city of Seattle, in 2013. Fiddleheads was the first entirely outdoor preschool in Seattle and one of the first urban outdoor preschools in the country. In 2017, Fiddleheads served over 80 families of children ages 3-5 in our morning, afternoon, and summer school programs, and has 176 families on our annual waitlist with children ages 3-5. Flexibility is a cornerstone of the Fiddleheads philosophy. Our program is as responsive as the environment in which we operate. Teachers take into

account a variety of factors including the weather, the wildlife, and the children themselves when determining the direction of the day. On any given day at Fiddleheads, students spend the morning exploring and engaging with their environment in a multitude of ways that is unique to our specific space. At Fiddleheads we believe strongly in empowering students to guide their own learning process, and work to help each of them develop the tools to do just that through use of a curriculum that expressly teaches self-regulation. We have found that the forest grove classroom is uniquely suited to helping children develop these skills through exposure to gradual, contextual change. Fiddleheads pioneered the outdoor preschool approach in Seattle and continue to lead the field both regionally and nationally. We established the Washington Nature Preschool Association to help support the field regionally, and work with the Natural Start Alliance to develop national standards of best practice. Our seasonal approach arises out of the unique relationship between, children, families, and the environment, and emphasizes the development of self-regulation and natural science skills. Becoming licensed would help set a standard of practice in the field and allow us to reach a greater diversity of families in and around the Seattle area.

**Into the Forest Preschool (Spokane, WA).** We are a licensed childcare facility that offers outdoor learning. We serve 15 children and 15 families. We opened our facility in hopes to create a program that blends the Reggio Approach and Waldorf Theory; focusing on a nature-infused learning environment with real life experiences. We also bring nature inside for learning. We believe children learn best through experiences of touching, moving, listening, and observing—when they have control over the direction of their learning. A child's self-confidence and self-esteem are built when they can explore and make their own decisions while being supported by peers and teachers. Our classrooms resemble homelike environments and use simple and natural materials, which allow children to immerse themselves in imaginative and creative play and learning. We also offer a safe place for children to explore and problem-solve in outdoor adventures. This strengthens the connection between children and the natural world. Everyday this outdoor program offers many opportunities for unplanned learning, such as watching birds build a nest or a hummingbird drink nectar from a flower. We want to build a solid foundation of healthy living habits that children can take with them as they grow and learn. Right now, we are unable to have or do a lot of the things we want to do, things that we know benefit a child's learning tremendously. We are participating in the pilot project to see if we can help change the standards in this area to allow such natural learning.

**The Madrona Nature School (Bellingham, WA).** The Madrona School is a licensed childcare located in Bellingham, WA founded 10 years ago by Laurie Saling. We are a Reggio Inspired program with an educational philosophy rooted in weaving inquiry-based learning with social-emotional development. We currently serve 30 families with approximately 15 on our wait list ages 2.5 - 5 years of age. Our younger students are based out of our building site with outdoor learning in our garden classroom and neighborhood park. Our Nature-Based PreK program, ages 4 -5, is outdoors with a "rain or shine" approach. The PreK programs spends its first 3 -4 hours in our neighboring city park, which has a variety of natural habitats to explore. This program provides students with large amounts of time to play, explore and experience natural ecosystems and materials. This outdoor engagement teaches ecological literacy and instills stewardship of our land. We have a stewardship agreement with the Bellingham Parks Department in which The Madrona School is responsible for a section of Squalicum Park to weed invasive plants in a habitat restoration area. The nature design principles of David Sobel guide our curriculum creation. In the afternoons the students return to the building site for

literacy and math workshops to extend our learning of the natural world in connection with the Early Learning Guidelines. We have chosen to participate in the DCYF pilot program to have the ability to increase our capacity to serve more families in our community with a Nature-Based full day program.

**Nurture in Nature Preschool (Tacoma, WA).** Nurture in Nature Preschool is based at the Tacoma Nature Center, which is a facility of Metro Parks Tacoma. Our mission is to provide a high-quality early childhood environment that meets preschoolers' needs, while inspiring them to love nature. We serve 64 children ages 3-6 years old during the school year in five different sections (from 64 families) and 12 pre-K students in summer school (from 12 families). With over 70 acres of natural area, several dedicated indoor and outdoor school spaces, and outstanding teachers and staff, this hands-on learning program allows children to learn and grow at their own pace. We encourage their endless curiosity and plant the seeds to help them become lifelong learners. Our emergent child-inspired curriculum often follows the changing seasons. Although traditional academic skills and opportunities are part of our school, they are definitely not the focus. Our philosophy is that preschoolers grow and learn how to be part of a community through play, discovery, and learning. When their brain is ready, they will naturally gravitate towards more academic pursuits.

**Olympic Nature Experience (Sequim, WA).** Olympic Nature Experience is a non-profit located in Sequim, Washington surrounded by the beautiful Olympic Peninsula. Our preschool programs run four days a week and serve 32 children, ages 3-6 years old, from 32 families. Several children have special needs such as speech impairment, giftedness or possible spectrum disorders. Our organization also runs programs a family play group, summer camps, after school programs, and homeschool enrichment classes for children from birth to age 12 years old. The backbone of our school's philosophy has developed from Wilderness Awareness School's nature connection model, which uses children's passions, emergent curriculum, and flexible activities to educate, inspire, and empower children. To ensure our children are meeting Early Learning standards and are Kindergarten Ready, we have created an in house Waldorf-inspired curriculum and an educational framework that incorporates the five standard Head Start domains. We added our own sixth domain, called Earth Wisdom which incorporates ideas of connection to place, critical thinking, community building and personal empowerment. By connecting children with their local environment, they are learning the age appropriate math, literacy, and cognition skills but with an everyday context that gives the world around them greater relevance.

Becoming licensed would benefit our programs by ensuring our staff has the support and training to meet the national and statewide standards that will set our students up for success no matter what their continued learning path takes. Additionally, allowing our programs to offer before- or after-care, or additional hours when appropriate and safe, could open our programs up to more families who are interested in our model. If we could access state funding for low income families, we could also decrease the heavy burden our organization has undertaken to ensure we have enough tuition assistance to meet the needs of our community.

**PLAY FRONTIER (Carson, WA).** Play Frontier aims to remove the barriers of cost and availability by forming a nonprofit childcare center (Frontier Center for Child Development) and an adult education hub (Frontier Center for Teaching & Learning). These two parts make us whole, because children are only as strong as the community that loves and cares for them. We are conserving childhood in Skamania County through acceptance, education, and



empowerment of children and families. In practice, this looks like children being agents of their own learning through observing, questioning, and discovery, alongside supportive adults who do the same.

Play Frontier is located at the southernmost border of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest in the old historic Wind River Nursery. Never heard of it? Neither had we until we stumbled upon a forest service ghost town, complete with miles of trails, a 9 acre arboretum and a training center where every park ranger in the nation was originally trained at the program's inception. Add to that the giant fields from the original Douglas fir nursery (that supplied the nation's trees for reforestation!) and you have the makings of a magical place where our deep bonds with nature and our local history come alive! Conservation itself was born here after Gifford Pinchot saw what logging was doing to our precious ecosystem. We offer full-time care for 32 children 0-5 years old, and believe that environmental stewardship starts at birth. With this in mind, we venture out to our neighboring trails daily.

A partnership with Community Enrichment of Klickitat and Skamania Counties (CEKC) connects us to local resources and allows us to operate as a 501(c)(3). We believe that all children deserve a quality, loving environment that connects them to nature, regardless of income. Community partners are paramount to our mission, as we seek to grow a community that values children and our earth - from the ground up.

**Polliwog Preschool: Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center (Bellevue, WA).**

Polliwog Preschool is a play- and nature-based preschool at the Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center in Bellevue. Now entering its eighth year, the program is a collaboration between the Pacific Science Center in Seattle and the City of Bellevue. At Polliwog, we believe that the natural world is an ideal catalyst for discovery and an amazing medium to lay a foundation for the love of learning. While we have indoor classroom space, we spend 50-90% of our day exploring the outdoors in the 320-acre wetland park. Polliwog Preschool has three part-time classes, with 12 children age 3-5 years old in each class. We currently serve 36 total families. Last year, we were only able to offer enrollment space to about 40% of families who applied.

Polliwog Preschool uses the natural world as the guiding theme to frame our core curriculum areas of science, art, music, math, language and literacy. The program is play-based and student-driven with a combination of activity choices, discovery explorations, and specific activities that relate to each week's theme. With a 320 acre wetland as our classroom, "Polliwogs" have the opportunity to hike through the forest, dip for creatures in a pond, investigate the flow of a stream, wander through meadows, and bounce on a bog. While we're not sure whether licensure is right for our program, we've enjoyed the advisory group discussions about best practices, and look forward to another year of participation in the pilot program.

**Saplings & Cedars: Squaxin Island Child Development Center (Shelton, WA).** Squaxin Island Child Development Center is a for-profit entity owned by the non-profit Squaxin Island Tribe. The center expanded their license capacity to begin offering Saplings & Cedars. We began Saplings & Cedars as our initial program for the Outdoor Preschool Pilot on October 1, 2018 with 12 children, ages 4-5. The program has been so popular that we will be adding an afternoon session in November or December. Saplings & Cedars is unique to the pilot project as it is part of an already licensed child care center through DCYF. The updated license capacity to

accommodate the outdoor class is 130. The center is located on property owned by the Squaxin Island Tribe. It is located near a natural forested area with two fresh water streams with a “culturally modified tree” as the focal point of the building. The site is surrounded by tall maple, fir and cedar trees and offers ground cover similar to a rain forest. Salmon return to the two streams each year as a part of their natural life cycle.

Our program celebrates and honors what “Mother-Earth” gives us. We have our own garden beds where the children actively engage in the planting and harvesting of crops that are used in our food service program. We partner closely with the Squaxin Island Community Garden staff and Community Development staff to participate in recycling and composting. Fruit trees were donated to establish our own orchard. The pumpkins we grow are used each October for National Pumpkin Day and apples are harvested to make cider. One of the highlights of our program is the annual Salmon Ceremony. The children are actively engaged in drumming, dancing and singing about the arrival of the first salmon. Tribal elders and leaders come and share stories about the life of the salmon and the children honor the salmon by respectfully returning part of the salmon back to the water to let other salmon know they are welcome here.

Although we use Creative Curriculum to guide our curriculum, we still practice emergent studies/curriculum to support the needs and interests of the children. There is a blend of group and individual exploration and play. Each day opens with a group safety meeting and concludes with a group hike into the forested area, before debriefing and returning to the classrooms for the afternoon, as most children are here for the entire day. It is the intent of this program to inspire exploration and making connections to the natural world.

**Tiny Trees Preschool (several locations throughout King County, WA).** Tiny Trees is a 501(c)(3) non-profit based in Seattle with classroom sites throughout King County. 265 children, ages 3-5 years old, from 265 families attend daily classes. Tiny Trees uses the High Scope curriculum, which incorporates evidence-based practices to provide the highest quality learning environment for our children. High Scope is a preferred curriculum of Head Start and Seattle Preschool Program facilities. Tiny Trees also makes preschool affordable by eliminating the cost of building, renovating, and maintaining a child care facility. We break down the schoolhouse walls and take the classroom outdoors. This means that instead of spending a huge amount on bricks and mortar, we spend money on what matters: hiring and supporting great teachers. Tiny Trees is a scale up of an innovative, proven concept. Started in Europe, outdoor preschools have shown to be healthier, more affordable and able to reach great academic outcomes. Tiny Trees is modeled after outdoor preschools in Norway, Germany and Denmark, three countries where the weather can get really cold. Tiny Trees also helps kids enter kindergarten ready to thrive. We help children learn to read, succeed at math and explore the wild where they receive both a world class science education and a gleefully muddy childhood: one full of play, exploration, and wonder in the great outdoors. Full day classes are a must for working families. Becoming a licensed child care provider would allow Tiny Trees the ability to offer students and families a higher quality environment, improved health and safety, and greater ability for low income families to work.

**Washington Outdoor School (Roslyn and Ellensburg, WA).** The Washington Outdoor School is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, based in Roslyn, Washington, that serves children from 2.5 to 6 years old in morning programs and children in grades K-5 in after school programs. Our programs currently serve approximately 55 children from 50 families in Kittitas County during fall, winter, and spring seasons, and we maintain a low student-to-teacher ratio (we also offer 7

weeks of Summer camp serving Preschool through Elementary age students). Our all-outdoor settings include forested trails—some more maintained than others (we come across fallen trees at times)—sandstone outcroppings, and seasonal creeks and streams in Roslyn. In Ellensburg, Helen McCabe State Park has a large pond and is skirted by a rushing creek, which makes its way to the Yakima River through a canyon. The landscape changes quite dramatically through the seasons. Access is easy along parts of the pond trail in late fall through winter, but the difficulty increases in the spring when grasses grow taller than the children. Two Crack Oak trees in the park are favorite places for the children to climb, and we spend a lot of time in and around them throughout the year. It is not unusual for us to walk more than a mile a day in both locations and sometimes much more than that in Roslyn. Drop off and pick up occur in local parks, Helen McCabe State Park (Ellensburg) and Centennial Park (Roslyn).

Our mission is to cultivate a child's sense of wonder and foster a sense of stewardship through immersion in the natural world. We believe that interacting with nature encourages a sense and knowledge of place, awakens curiosity and creates healthy minds and bodies. Our work is based on the core values of strong communities, equal access to outdoor adventures, and stewardship of our natural world. Our approach to education is child-interest led with an emphasis on experiencing each day in the moment—noticing changes and building on previous experiences. The natural world provides our curriculum for the day. We are about exploration, play, building positive relationships with each other and the world around us, and experiencing what the natural world has to offer, which cultivates an attitude of joy and wonder within each child. We infuse experiences with relevant books, stories, songs, and activities. These experiences can include journal writing, crafts, and, in Roslyn, planting and tending to garden spaces. Being licensed by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families would validate our type of program and communicate to families that programs like the Washington Outdoor School provide viable preschool options for kindergarten readiness. We seek to provide equal access to outdoor adventures, but many families in Kittitas County struggle to afford early learning programs for their children. As a DCYF- licensed program, families could use state subsidies toward tuition, which would allow our program to better serve our economically diverse community.



# APPENDIX D

## SICDC Nature Preschool

Squaxin Island Child Development Center in cooperation with the Department of Children, Youth and Families was selected and is participating in a statewide pilot licensing project for Outdoor Preschool Classrooms.

The program will be nature-based and will be outdoors, every day, all year. This is not a fair weather program. There is no such thing as “bad weather” only “bad clothing.” As such, the children will be provided with high quality rain pants and jackets. The program will have inherent risks. The children will have freedom of movement in a highly supervised setting. Part of the day is structured and the other part allows for individual exploration. There will be climbing and crawling near water a fresh water stream. Children will encounter insects (ticks, bees, mosquitos) and plants (stinging nettles, mushrooms). The children will be taught about all of these things during their experiences in the forested area surrounding the center. A small shelter and fire pit will be constructed that will include having occasional small fires and cooking activities.

### What is a Nature Preschool?

The concept of nature-based, outdoor learning started with the Forest School movement in the 1950’s in several European countries, and has been gaining momentum in North America since the late 2000’s. One of the many special features of a Nature Preschool is that all of the sessions are held in the same natural area over a period of time, allowing participants to become very comfortable in and knowledgeable about their play space.

### Why a Nature Preschool?

There are many benefits of an outdoor, play-based preschool, including:

- Improved confidence, social skills, communication, motivation and concentration
- Improved physical stamina, fine and gross motor skills
- Positive identity formation for all individuals and communities
- Increased knowledge of the environment, increased frequency of visiting nature with families
- Healthy and safe risk taking
- Improved creativity and resilience
- Improved academic achievement and self-regulation
- Reduced stress and increased patience, self-discipline, capacity for attention and recovery from mental fatigue
- Improved higher level cognitive skills

The SICDC Nature Preschool runs almost exclusively outdoors and uses nature as a venue for play and exploration in all seasons, strengthening the connection between children and the natural world. During every session children and teachers have many opportunities for unplanned natural learning such as when a salmon heads upstream or a slug crosses their path.

A responsive curriculum focuses on all areas of healthy child development; social-emotional, creative and cognitive. It is the intent of this program to inspire exploration, critical thinking, creativity and community. Making connections to nature is the first step toward learning about the natural world and becoming a good steward of the environment. Environmental sustainability is important to us. The impact of our presence on the site’s environment will be closely monitored. Children will engage in discussions around care for the environment and involve them in stewardship activities.

### Weather and Safety

Exploring nature can happen in all types of weather. Children will be required to dress appropriately and be prepared to fully participate. The program will operate rain or shine. Staff will closely monitor weather forecasts and conditions and have back up plans for high wind and other adverse weather conditions.

Safety is a high priority. Staff will conduct environmental checks before each session, by scanning the site for hazards and identifying risks. Risk is an integral part of the program and will be woven in as part of the curriculum.

We recognize that children will come to us with different experiences and comfort levels with the outdoors. We will be sensitive to this and observe children carefully to gauge their needs, so that all children can successfully connect with nature and enjoy their time outdoors. We will help them to safely and gradually push their limits-for some children this may mean climbing a tree, for others it may mean getting wet or muddy.

### Program Staffing

Licensing standards require a 1 to 6 ratio. The class will only have 12 children enrolled at a time. There will be three teachers, two lead teachers and one classroom assistant. The teachers are required to hold the same certified training as the regular classroom teachers and have a keen interest, passion and expertise to the program. All staff have First-Aid and CPR certification. The lead teachers will be trained as certified life guards for water related activities. All staff have been background checked and been trained on the policies and procedures for the program.

### A Typical Day

Each day, participants meet in a designated outdoor location and gather with a welcome. Although staff have a plan for the day, activities are largely based on children’s interests. Instructors support children’s inquiries by giving them time and space to make their own discoveries.

Activities will involve natural materials daily and may also include stories, art, problem solving, exploration and imaginative play. Examples include creating patterns or art on the forest floor, sorting and counting natural materials, the use of bug jars and magnifiers to take a closer look at nature’s tiniest discoveries, or finding a symbol for a letter in a tree’s bark.

To be eligible for the program a child must be enrolled in the River Otter, Raccoon or Black Bear Rooms. The child must be toilet trained to be in the program and parents are required to complete an enrollment packet, sign a risk waiver, agree their child will participate daily and attend an orientation prior to starting the program.



*Stepping Stones Summer Workers Getting the Site Ready*



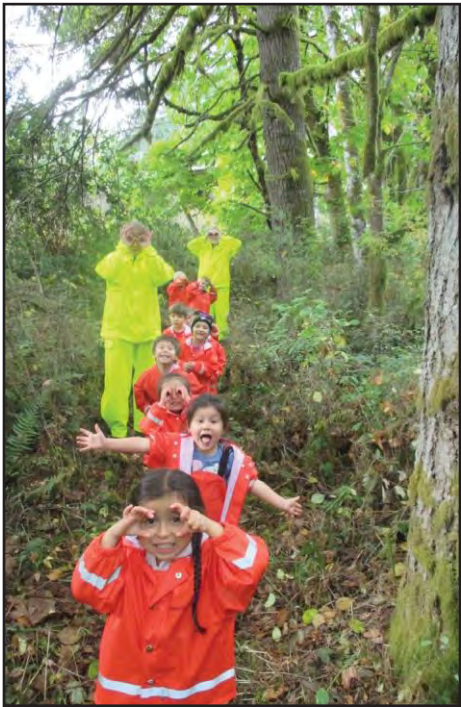
# Welcome Saplings

From the CDC Board, written & pictures by Sis Brownfield - Our new outdoor class, the Saplings, at the Child Development Center is up and running. The class started in early October. Each child was issued rain gear, boots and water bottles. The site is equipped with adult and child sized port-a-potties as well as a hand washing station. We started with one class of 12 students, but already have a waiting list and will be looking to begin a second class in the future.

The class is outside from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. every day. Those who are full-time at the CDC then go indoors for the remainder of the day. This program actually allows us more space to serve more children at the CDC.

There has been so much support and help in getting the site and staff ready. Chambliss Keith worked with the Stepping Stones youth over the summer to upgrade the trails. He also took care of some dangerous trees that needed to be taken down. There were workshops and training for staff. Jesse Fenton made awesome tables and chairs. CDC staff, families and volunteers have stepped up and done some amazing work to provide this wonderful opportunity for our preschoolers. We cannot thank them enough.

We have plans for more to come; a shelter will be built and the curriculum is always developing around the children’s interests and learning needs. The kids have already made a fort. The class also works at planting, maintaining, and harvesting -the garden. It will always be an ever changing landscape within the natural setting. The class is respectful of the natural areas and know their boundaries. We look forward to having an open house for the families and community in the near future.







## EXHIBIT A

### Outdoor Preschool Pilot Standards – “The Touchstone Standards”.

#### INTENT AND AUTHORITY

##### 0005 Definitions.

The definitions in this section apply throughout these standards unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

- (1) **“Accessible to children”** means items, areas, or materials of an outdoor preschool program that a child can reasonably reach, enter, use, or get to on their own.
- (2) **“Accommodations”** means program curriculum and instruction, activities, spaces, and materials that have been adapted to help children and adults with special need function within their surroundings.
- (3) **“Active supervision”** or **“actively supervise”** means a heightened standard of care beyond supervision. This standard requires an outdoor preschool provider to see and hear the children they are responsible for during higher risk activities. The provider must be able to prevent or instantly respond to unsafe or harmful events.
- (4) **“ADA”** means the Americans with Disabilities Act, as now and hereafter amended.
- (5) **“Aide”** means a person who offers support to the outdoor preschool program staff.
- (6) **“Allergy”** or **“allergies”** means an overreaction of the immune system to a substance that is harmless to most people. During an allergic reaction, the body’s immune system treats the substance or “allergen” as an invader. The body over reacts by releasing chemicals that may cause symptoms ranging from mildly annoying to life threatening. Common allergens include certain foods (milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, common tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, and soybeans) pollen, mold, or medication.
- (7) **“Annual”** means the calendar year, January 1 through December 31.
- (8) **“Applicant”** means an individual who has made a formal request for a child care license, certification, exemption, or portable background check.
- (9) **“Appropriate”** when used to refer to child care or educational materials means that the materials will interest and challenge children in terms of their ages and abilities.
- (10) **“Appropriately”** means correct or properly suited for a particular situation.
- (11) **“Assistant Director”** means a person responsible for the overall management of the outdoor preschool program including the facility and operation.

- (12) **“Assistant Teacher”** means a person whose work is to assist a lead teacher or licensee in providing instructional supports to children and implementing a developmentally appropriate program. The assistant must carry out assigned tasks under the supervision of a lead teacher, program supervisor, director, assistant director, or licensee.
- (13) **“ASTM”** means the American Society for Testing and Materials.
- (14) **“Bathroom”** means a room containing a built-in flush-type toilet.
- (15) **“Benefit-risk assessment”** means, for purposes of outdoor, nature-based early childhood education, a process of identifying hazards and risky play elements in early childhood outdoor play and making plans to mitigate children’s risk of injury while maintaining the developmental benefits for children. This process includes identifying the type(s) of risk present in a location or activity, the likelihood and severity of potential injury, the potential benefits to children, methods of mitigating hazards (e.g. elimination, substitution, isolation, safeguards) and managing risk (e.g. heightened supervision, scaffolding, intervention), and making a plan for who is responsible for implementing the appropriate methods and when.
- (16) **“Bias”** means a tendency to believe that some people or ideas are better than others that usually results in treating some people unfairly.
- (17) **“Body of water”** or **“Bodies of water”** means a natural area or human-made area or device that contains or holds a depth of more than two inches of water. Examples include swimming pools, ditches, canals, fish ponds, water retentions, excavations, and quarries.
- (18) **“CACFP”** means the Child and Adult Care Food Program established by Congress and funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).
- (19) **“Campfire”** means an outdoor fire that is used for cooking, personal warmth, lighting, ceremonial, or esthetic purposes. Campfire does not mean a fire within any building, mobile home, motor vehicle, or recreational vehicle.
- (20) **“Campfire activities”** means outdoor preschool program activities in which enrolled children have access to a campfire that poses a risk of burns to children.
- (21) **“Cannabis”** (also known as **“marijuana”**) refers to all parts of the Cannabis plant, whether growing or not, including but not limited to the seeds the resin or concentrate extracted from any part of the plant, and every compound, manufacture, salt, derivative, mixture, or preparation of the plant.
- (22) **“Capacity”** means the maximum number of children an early learning provider is authorized by the department to have in care at any given time. This includes any children on site at the early learning program and any children in transit to or from the program or other activities such as field trips while the children are signed in to the care of the program.

- (23) **“Center early learning program”** means, pursuant to RCW 43.216.010(1)(a), a facility providing regularly scheduled early childhood education and early learning services for a group of children birth through twelve years of age for periods of less than twenty-four hours per day (“child day care center”).
- (24) **“Center early learning program licensee”** or **“center licensee”** means an entity licensed and authorized by the department to operate a center early learning program.
- (25) **“Certificate of exemption (COE)”** means a form that is approved by the Washington state department of health and consistent with the requirements described in WAC 246-105-050, or an immunization form produced by the state immunization information system.
- (26) **“Certificate of immunization status (child)”** means a form that is approved by the Washington state department of health and consistent with the requirements described in WAC 246-105-050, or an immunization form produced by the state immunization information system.
- (27) **“Certification”** means department approval of a person, home, or facility that is exempt from licensing but requests evidence that the program meets these foundational licensing standards.
- (28) **“Child”** means an individual that is younger than age thirteen, including any infant, toddler, preschool-age child, or school-age child as defined in these standards.
- (29) **“Child abuse or neglect”** or **“abuse or neglect”** means, pursuant to RCW 26.44.020, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or injury of a child by any person under circumstances which cause harm to the child's health, welfare, or safety, excluding conduct permitted under RCW [9A.16.100](#); or the negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child by a person responsible for or providing care to the child.
- (30) **“Child care”** means the supervision of children outside the child's home for periods of less than 24 hours a day.
- (31) **“Child Care Basics”** or **“CCB”** means a curriculum designed to meet the initial basic training requirement for early learning program staff working in licensed or certified programs in Washington State. It serves as a broad introduction for professionals who are pursuing a career in the early care and education field.
- (32) **“Chromated copper arsenate (CCA)”** means a wood preservative and insecticide that contains roughly 22% arsenic, a known carcinogen. The United States restricted the use of CCA on residential lumber in 2003, but it can still be found on older decks and playground equipment. Information about the health hazards or arsenic can be found on the Washington state department of health website.
- (33) **“Clean”** or **“cleaning”** means to remove dirt and debris from a surface by scrubbing and washing with a detergent solution and rinsing with water. This process must be accomplished before sanitizing or disinfecting a surface.



- (34) **“Confidential”** means the protection of personal information, such as the child's records, from individuals that are not authorized to have access to such information.
- (35) **“Consistent care”** means providing steady opportunities for children to build emotionally secure relationships by primarily interacting with a limited number of early learning program staff.
- (36) **“Contagious disease”** means an illness caused by an infectious agent of public health concern which can be transmitted from one person, animal, or object to another person by direct or indirect means including transmission through an intermediate host or vector, food, water, or air. The Washington state department of health publishes a list of contagious diseases.
- (37) **“Continuous”** means without interruptions, gaps, or stopping.
- (38) **“Core Competencies”** means standards required by the department that detail what early learning providers need to know and are able to do to provide quality care and education for children and their families.
- (39) **“CPSC”** means the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission.
- (40) **“Cultural”** or **“culturally”** means the ideas, habits, beliefs, customs, and social behavior of different societies.
- (41) **“Curriculum philosophy”** means a written statement of principles developed by an outdoor preschool provider to form the basis of the learning program activities, including age appropriate developmental learning objectives for children.
- (42) **“DCYF”** or **“the department”** means the Washington State department of children, youth, and families.
- (43) **“Developmentally appropriate”** means:
- (a) When an outdoor preschool provider interacts with each child in a way that recognizes and respects the child's chronological and developmental age;
  - (b) An action based on knowledge about how children grow and learn; and
  - (c) Providing interactions and activities consistent with the developmental level or needs of the individual child;
- (44) **“Developmental screening”** means the use of standardized tools to identify a child at risk of a developmental delay or disorder. (Source: American Academy of Pediatrics, *Healthy Child Care America*, 2009)
- (45) **“Director”** means the person responsible for the overall management of an outdoor preschool program including the facility and operation.
- (46) **“Discipline”** means a method used to redirect a child in order to achieve a desired behavior.

- (47) **“Disability”** or **“disabilities”** shall have the same meaning as the definition of disability under RCW 49.60.040(7), Washington’s Law Against Discrimination.
- (48) **“Disinfectant”** means a chemical liquid used to destroy bacteria. The term “disinfectant” includes:
- (a) A chlorine bleach and water solution of one tablespoon of chlorine bleach to one quart of cool water, allowed to stand wet for at least two minutes; or
  - (b) Other disinfectant products registered with the EPA, if used strictly according to the manufacturer’s label instructions including, but not limited to, quantity, time the product must be left in place, adequate time to allow the product to dry or rinsing if applicable, and appropriateness for use on the surface to be disinfected. Any disinfectant used on food contact surfaces or toys must be labeled “safe for food contact surfaces”.
- (49) **“Disinfect”** means to eliminate virtually all germs from inanimate surface areas by using a disinfectant to clean and rinse the inanimate surface area.
- (50) **“Drinking water”** or **“potable water”** means water that is suitable for drinking by the public as determined by the Washington state department of health or a local health jurisdiction.
- (51) **“Dual language learners”** means children that are learning two or more languages at the same time. This term includes children who learn two or more languages from birth, and children who are still mastering their home language when they are introduced to and start learning a second language. (Source: the *Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines*.)
- (52) **“Early Achievers”** a state-wide system of high quality early learning that connects families to early learning programs with the help of an easy-to-understand rating system and offers coaching, professional development, and resources for early learning providers to support each child’s learning and development
- (53) **“Early Childhood Education (ECE) Initial Certificate”** means Washington’s Initial Certificate in Early Childhood Education and is the point of entry for a career in early learning. The ECE Initial Certificate covers foundational content for early learning professionals, and requires the early learning professional to earn twelve quarter credits.
- (54) **“Early Childhood Education (ECE) Short Certificate”** means Washington’s Short Certificate in Early Childhood Education. The ECE Short Certificate offers areas of specialization, and builds on the State’s Initial Certificate. The ECE Short Certificate requires the early learning professional to obtain the ECE Initial Certificate and complete eight quarter credits.
- (55) **“Early Childhood Education (ECE) State Certificate”** means Washington’s State Certificate in Early Childhood Education and is the benchmark for the Early Achievers Level 2 Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals. The ECE State Certificate prepares the early care and education professional for obtaining an associate’s degree in Early Childhood Education. The ECE State Certificate requires

the early care and education professional to obtain the ECE Short Certificate, and twenty-seven quarter credits.

- (56) **“Early learning program”** means regularly scheduled care, including an outdoor preschool program, for a group of children birth through twelve years of age for periods of less than twenty-four hours, licensed by the department.
- (57) **“Early learning program space”** means the licensed indoor and outdoor space on the premises approved by the department for the purpose of providing licensed child care.
- (58) **“Early learning program staff”** refers to all persons who work, substitute, or volunteer in an early learning program, including an outdoor preschool program, during hours when children are or may be present, excluding licensees.
- (59) **“ECEAP”** or **“Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program”** is a comprehensive preschool program that provides free services and support to eligible children and their families.
- (60) **“Emergent Curriculum”** means a philosophy of teaching and way of planning curriculum that focuses on being responsive to children's interests to create meaningful learning experiences. This philosophy prioritizes active participation, relationship building, flexible and adaptable methods, inquiry, and play-based learning. Curriculum is child-initiated, collaborative and responsive to the children's needs, and teachers come prepared with information and/or resources to support children's explorations.
- (61) **“Electronic record”** means a record generated, communicated, received, or stored by electronic means for use in an information system or for transmission from one information system to another.
- (62) **“Electronic signature”** means a signature in electronic form attached to or logically associated with an electronic record including, but not limited to, a digital signature. An electronic signature is a paperless way to sign a document using an electronic sound, symbol, or process, attached to or logically associated with a record, and executed or adopted by a person with the intent to sign the record.
- (63) **“Electronic workforce registry”** means the Washington state department of children, youth, and families' current database of professional records of individual early learning providers.
- (64) **“Emergency preparedness”** means a continuous cycle of planning, organizing, training, equipping, exercising, evaluating, and taking corrective action in an effort to ensure effective coordination in case of emergencies or during incident response.
- (65) **“Enforcement action”** means the denial, suspension, revocation, modification, or nonrenewal of a license to participate in the Pilot Project. An outdoor preschool provider may challenge an enforcement action and request an adjudicative proceeding pursuant to chapter 43.216 RCW and chapter 170-03 WAC.
- (66) **“EPA”** means the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

- (67) **“Equivalency”** means, when referring to staff qualifications, an individual that is allowed to meet the requirements of these standards through a department recognized alternative credential, or demonstration of competency, that indicates similar knowledge as the named credential.
- (68) **“Exempt”** or **“exemption”** means with regard to immunizations a type of immunization status approved by the Washington state department of health where a child has not been fully immunized against one or more vaccine-preventable diseases due to medical, religious, philosophical or personal reasons.
- (69) **“Expel”** or **“Expulsion”** means to end a child’s enrollment in an early learning program. An early learning provider will end a child’s enrollment if the provider is unable to meet a child’s needs due to the child’s challenging behavior.
- (70) **“Family home early learning program”** means an early learning program licensed by the department where a family home licensee provides child care or education services for twelve or fewer children in the family living quarters where the licensee resides as provided in RCW 43.216.010(1)(c)(“family day care provider”).
- (71) **“Family home early learning program licensee”** or **“family home licensee”** means an individual licensee authorized by the department to operate a family home early learning program within the licensee’s family living quarters.
- (72) **“Family living quarters”** means a family home licensee or applicant’s residence and other spaces or buildings on the licensee’s or applicant’s family home premises.
- (73) **“Food Worker card”** means a card issued by the Washington state department of health that permits a trained individual to safely and appropriately handle food served to the public.
- (74) **“Good repair”** means that eighty percent or more of the materials and components are unbroken, have all their pieces, and can be used by the children as intended by the manufacturer or builder.
- (75) **“Hazard”**, means a source of harm that is not obvious to the child, such that the potential for injury is hidden; or a source of harm that is greater than a child can manage to avoid.
- (76) **“Health care provider”** means a person who is licensed, certified, registered, or otherwise authorized by the laws of the State of Washington to provide health care in the ordinary course of business or practice of a profession.
- (77) **“Immunization”** means the process of administering a vaccine to make that person immune or resistant to an infectious disease.
- (78) **“Inaccessible to children”** means a method to prevent a child from reaching, entering, using, or getting to items, areas, or materials of an outdoor preschool program.



- (79) **“Inactive”** means, when used by the department, a licensing status, or means early learning providers who have requested and have been approved to temporarily stop caring for children and close their early learning program.
- (80) **“Individual Care Plan”** means a specific plan to meet the individual needs of a child with a food allergy, special dietary requirement due to a health condition, other special needs or circumstances.
- (81) **“Infant”** means a child birth through eleven months of age.
- (82) **“In-service training”** means professional development requirements for continuing education delivered or approved by the department to maintain staff standards and qualifications while employed as an outdoor preschool provider.
- (83) **“Internal review process”** has the same meaning in these standards as in RCW 43.216.395, as now or hereafter amended.
- (84) **“Lead Teacher”** means an outdoor preschool provider who works as the lead staff person in charge of a child or group of children and implements activity programs.
- (85) **“License”** means a permit issued by the department legally authorizing an applicant to operate an early learning program.
- (86) **“Licensed space”** means the indoor and outdoor space on the premises approved by the department for the purpose of providing licensed child care.
- (87) **“Licensee”** means an individual or legal entity listed on a license issued by the department that is authorized to provide child care or early learning services in a center, family home setting, or an outdoor, nature-based early learning and child care program.
- (88) **“Lockdown”** means restricted to an interior room with few or no windows while the facility or building is secured from a threat.
- (89) **“Locking mechanism”** means a lock that requires a key, tumbler, dial, passcode, touchpad, or similar device or method to lock and unlock.
- (90) **“Modification”** when used in reference to an early learning provider’s licensing status, means an enforcement action by the department to change the conditions identified on a licensee’s current license.
- (91) **“Moisture-wicking”** means a fabric that draws moisture away from the body, such as polyester or wool. Cotton is not a moisture-wicking fabric.
- (92) **“Natural space”** means land that is natural, semi-natural, or planted and includes plants, animals, and other features and products of the earth.
- (93) **“Non-expiring pilot license”** means, pursuant to chapter 43.216 RCW, a license that is issued to an outdoor preschool provider following the initial licensing period. For the purposes of this pilot project all licenses, including non-expiring pilot licenses, shall

become void at the conclusion of the pilot project unless otherwise extended due to additional legislative action.

- (94) **“Operating hours”** means the hours listed in an early learning program parent handbook when the program is open and providing care and services to children.
- (95) **“Outdoor preschool”, or “outdoor, nature-based early learning and child care program”** means an entity-offered program operated primarily outdoors in which children are enrolled on a regular basis for three or more hours per day. For purposes of this section, “primarily” means a participant must operate an outdoor classroom for more than fifty percent of the program hours per day. Such programs may be offered as:
  - (a) An outdoor component of a licensed early learning program; or
  - (b) A program operating entirely outdoors on private or public park land, with or without a permanently located outdoor classroom.
- (96) **“Outdoor preschool provider” or “provider”** refers to an outdoor preschool licensee or a designee who works in an outdoor preschool program during hours when children are or may be present. Designees include Outdoor Preschool Directors, Assistant Director, Program Supervisors, Lead Teachers, Assistant Teachers, Aides, and Volunteers.
- (97) **“Parent” or “guardian”** means birth parent, custodial parent, foster parent, legal guardian or those authorized by the parent or other entity legally responsible for the welfare of the child.
- (98) **“Peer interaction”** means the relationships children have with one another including, but not limited to, how infants and toddlers play near one another and how preschoolers play together, communicate, and whether they fight or get along.
- (99) **“Permanently located outdoor classroom”** means an outdoor area that is allocated to an outdoor preschool program for daily use, and the outdoor preschool provider or public park installs permanent or semi-permanent equipment for the program’s use, such as storage containers, portable chemical toilets, or child-sized furniture.
- (100) **“Personal needs”** means an outdoor preschool provider’s toileting or medication needs. Personal needs do not include smoking or use of tobacco products, illegal drug use or misuse of prescription drugs, conducting business or related activities, sleeping or napping, screen time, or leaving children in unattended care.
- (101) **“Pest”** means an animal, plant, or insect that has a harmful effect on humans, food, or living conditions.
- (102) **“Pesticide”** means chemicals used to kill pests.
- (103) **“Pet”** means a domestic or tamed animal or bird kept for companionship or pleasure.
- (104) **“Physical barrier with a locking mechanism”** means a non-climbable fence or wall that is at least five feet tall and has no openings greater than two inches, but may have a gate or door that allows entry into a body of water, or exit from a body of water. In addition to the requirements listed above, the physical barrier shall also have the

following additional requirements: all gates must have a locking mechanism, a self-closing or self-latching automatic locking device, and a device used to open the locks which is inaccessible to children but readily available to staff.

- (105) **“Physical restraint”** means holding a child as gently as possible for the minimum amount of time necessary to control a situation where that own child’s safety or the safety of others is threatened.
- (106) **“Poison”** means substances, chemicals, chemical compounds (other than naturally occurring compounds such as water or salt), or similar items, that even in small quantities are likely to cause injury or illness if it is swallowed or comes into contact with a child's skin, eyes, mouth, or mucus membranes.
- (107) **“Premises”** means the licensed and unlicensed space at the licensed address including, but not limited to, buildings, land and residences.
- (108) **“Preschool age children”** means a child thirty months through six years of age not attending kindergarten or elementary school.
- (109) **“Pre-service training”** means professional development standards or requirements for outdoor preschool program staff prior to hiring or within a department specified time frame and delivered or approved by the department.
- (110) **“Private septic system”** means a septic system that is not connected to a public sewer system maintained by a government agency. A private septic system includes, but is not limited to, the septic system’s drain field and tanks.
- (111) **“Probationary license”** shall have the same meaning as described in RCW 43.216.010(22).
- (112) **“Professional Development Support Plan”** means a formal approach by which an individual who is supervising staff sets out the goals, strategies, and outcomes of learning and training.
- (113) **“Program Supervisor”** means the outdoor preschool provider responsible for planning and supervising the learning and activity program.
- (114) **“RCW”** means the Revised Code of Washington.
- (115) **“Readily available”** means able to be used or obtained quickly and easily.
- (116) **“Revocation”** or **“revoke”** when used in reference to an early learning provider’s licensing status, means an enforcement action by the department to close an early learning program and permanently remove the license.
- (117) **“Risk”** when used in reference to “risky play”, means a situation in which a child can recognize and evaluate challenge and decide on a course of action, although there is the potential for injury. In this context, risk can be necessary to support healthy child development.

- (118) **“Risky play”** means physical activity and play that is thrilling and exciting and where there is a risk of physical injury. Risky play for outdoor preschools includes, but is not limited to, play involving heights, speed, dangerous tools, or near dangerous elements (e.g. fall into something), and where children may get lost.
- (119) **“Routine care”** means typical or usual care provided to a child during the time the child is enrolled in the outdoor preschool program (for example: feeding, diapering, toileting, napping, resting, playing, and learning).
- (120) **“Safe route”** means a way, direction, or course taken to get from a starting point to a destination that is protected from danger or risk.
- (121) **“Safety Plan”** means a written plan to implement program changes to bring an outdoor preschool program into compliance with these standards. Safety plans are developed at meetings involving at least an outdoor preschool provider and the outdoor preschool pilot program specialist and supervisor. Safety plans detail changes the provider needs to make to mitigate the risk of direct and indirect harm to children enrolled in the outdoor preschool program. Program changes shall be agreed to in writing and signed by all participants at the meeting. Safety plans expire 30 calendar days after being signed by all parties. Safety plans may only be extended for an additional 30 days and extensions may only be authorized by a department supervisor.
- (122) **“Sanitize”** means to reduce the number of microorganisms on a surface by the process of:
- (a) Cleaning and rinsing with water at a high temperature pursuant to these standards; or
  - (b) Cleaning and rinsing, followed by using:
    - i. A chlorine bleach and water solution of three-quarters teaspoon of chlorine bleach to one quart of cool water, allowed to stand wet for at least two minutes; or
    - ii. Other sanitizer product if it is registered with the EPA and used strictly according to manufacturer's label instructions including, but not limited to, quantity used, time the product must be left in place, adequate time to allow the product to dry, and appropriateness for use on the surface to be sanitized. If used on food contact surfaces or toys, a sanitizer product must be labeled as “safe for food contact surfaces.”
- (123) **“School-age children” or “school age child”** means a child not less than five years of age, through twelve years of age that is attending kindergarten or elementary school.
- (124) **“Screen time”** means watching, using, or playing television, computers, video games, video or DVD players, mobile communication devices, or other similar devices.
- (125) **“Serious injury”** means an injury resulting in an overnight hospital stay; a severe neck or head injury; choking or serious unexpected breathing problems; severe bleeding; shock or an acute confused state; sudden unconsciousness; dangerous chemicals that come into contact with the eyes or skin, or dangerous chemicals that are ingested; near drowning; one or more broken bones; a severe burn requiring professional medical care; poisoning; or an overdose from a chemical substance.



- (126) **“Shelter-in-place”** means staff and children staying at the facility due to an external threat such as a storm, chemical or gas leak or explosion, or other event that prohibits the occupants from safely leaving the facility.
- (127) **“Sign”** means an individual formally placing their name or legal mark on a document by physical signature or electronic signature.
- (128) **“Sleeping equipment”** means a bed, cot, mattress, mat, crib, bassinet, play yard or “pack and play”. Sleeping equipment does not include a car seat or infant swing.
- (129) **“Special needs”** is a term used for children who require assistance due to learning difficulties, physical disability, or emotional and behavioral difficulties and who have documentation in the form of an individual educational plan (IEP), individual health plan (IHP), 504 plan, or an individualized family service plan (IFSP).
- (130) **“Staff”** means any outdoor preschool provider providing care in the outdoor preschool program.
- (131) **“Strengthening Families Program Self-Assessment”** means a research-informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development, and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. It is based on engaging families, programs, and communities in building five protective factors:
- (a) Parental resilience;
  - (b) Social connections;
  - (c) Knowledge of parenting and child development;
  - (d) Concrete support in times of need; and
  - (e) Social and emotional competence of children
- (132) **“Supervise”** or **“supervision”** means an outdoor preschool provider must be able to see or hear the children they are responsible for at all times. Outdoor preschool providers must use their knowledge of each child’s development and behavior to anticipate what may occur to prevent unsafe or unhealthy events or conduct, or to intervene in such circumstances as soon as possible. Outdoor preschool providers must also reposition themselves or the children to be aware of where children are and what they are doing during care. An outdoor preschool provider must reassess and adjust their supervision each time child care activities change. See “active supervision” for a heightened standard of care.
- (133) **“Suspend”** when used in reference to an early learning provider’s licensing status, means an enforcement action by the department to temporarily stop a license in order to protect the health, safety, or welfare of enrolled children or the public.
- (134) **“Swimming pool”** means a pool that has a water depth greater than two feet (24 inches).
- (135) **“Technical assistance”** means a service given to outdoor preschool providers by department staff or a contracted third party for the purpose of providing help that is

related to providing guidance, information, and resources to help a provider fully comply with the licensing requirements and these standards.

- (136) **“Toddler”** means a child twelve months through twenty-nine months of age.
- (137) **“Tummy time”** means placing an infant in a nonrestrictive prone position, lying on his or her stomach when not in sleeping equipment.
- (138) **“Transition”** is the process or period of time to change from one activity, place, grade level, or sleeping arrangement to another.
- (139) **“Unlicensed Space”** means the indoor and outdoor areas of the premises not approved by the department as licensed space that the outdoor preschool provider must make inaccessible to the children during child care hours.
- (140) **“Unsupervised access”** shall have the same meaning as described in WAC 110-06-0020 as now or hereafter amended.
- (141) **“Usable space”** means the areas that are available at all times for use by children in an outdoor preschool program that complies with the licensing requirements.
- (142) **“USDA”** means the United States Department of Agriculture.
- (143) **“Vapor product”** means any:
  - (a) Device that employs a battery or other mechanism to heat a solution or substance to produce a vapor or aerosol intended for inhalation;
  - (b) Cartridge or container of a solution or substance intended to be used with or in such device or to refill such device; or
  - (c) Solution or substance intended for use in such device, including, but not limited to, concentrated nicotine, non-nicotine substances, or supplemental flavorings. This includes any electronic cigarettes, electronic nicotine delivery systems, electronic cigars, electronic cigarillos, electronic pipes, hookahs, steam stones, vape pens, or similar products or devices, as well as any parts that can be used to build such products or devices.
- (144) **“Variance”** means an official approval by the department to allow an outdoor preschool program to achieve an outcome described in these standards in an alternative way than what is described in these standards due to the needs of a unique or specific program approach or methodology. The department must grant a request for variance if the proposed alternative provides clear and convincing evidence that the health, welfare, and safety of all enrolled children will not be jeopardized. An outdoor preschool provider does not have the right to appeal the department’s disapproval of request for variance under chapter 110-03 WAC. The provider may challenge a variance disapproval on a department form.
- (145) **“Volunteer”** means any person who provides labor or services to an outdoor preschool provider but is not compensated with employment pay or benefits. A volunteer must never have unsupervised access to a child unless the volunteer is the parent or guardian of that child or is an authorized person pursuant to standard 0345(1)(c).

- (146) **“WAC”** means the Washington Administrative Code.
- (147) **“Wading pool”** means a pool that has a water depth of less than two feet (24 inches).
- (148) **“Waiver”** means, unless the context otherwise indicates, an official approval by the department allowing an outdoor preschool provider not to meet or satisfy a rule in these standards due to specific needs of the program or an enrolled child. The department must grant a request for waiver if the proposed waiver provides clear and convincing evidence that the health, welfare, and safety of all enrolled children is not jeopardized. An outdoor preschool provider does not have the right to appeal the department’s disapproval of a waiver request under chapter 110-03 WAC. The provider may challenge a waiver disapproval on a department form.
- (149) **“Walking independently”** means an individual is able to stand and move easily without the aid or assistance of holding onto an object, wall, equipment, or another individual.
- (150) **“Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines”** means the guidelines published by the department, the Washington state Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), and Thrive Washington for children birth through third grade that outlines what children know and are able to do at different stages of their development.
- (151) **“Water activities”** means outdoor preschool program activities in which enrolled children swim or play in a body of water that poses a risk of drowning for children. Water activities do not include using sensory tables, or playing in temporary puddles at an outdoor preschool.
- (152) **“Weapon”** means an instrument or device of any kind that is used or designed to be used to inflict harm including, but not limited to, rifles, handguns, shotguns, antique firearms, knives, swords, bows and arrows, BB guns, pellet guns, air rifles, electronic or other stun devices, or fighting implements.
- (153) **“Written Food Plan”** means a document that is designed to give alternative food to a child in care because of a child’s medical needs or special diet, or to accommodate a religious, cultural, or family preference. A parent or guardian and the outdoor preschool provider must sign a written food plan.

## 0010 Outdoor Preschool Pilot License.

- (1) In addition to the requirements described in WAC 110-300D-0015, an "outdoor, nature-based early learning and child care program (“outdoor preschool”) license may be available to an individual or entity if the individual or entity can provide child care or early learning services under the following conditions:
- (a) The child care or early learning program must be provided with a philosophy, curriculum, and organizational practices that provide developmentally appropriate early childhood education and environmental education;
  - (b) The child care or early learning program must occur outdoors for more than fifty percent (50%) of the daily service period and more than three hours per day;

- (c) The child care or early learning program must comply with the requirements contained in chapter 43.216 RCW, chapter 110-06 WAC (background checks), the Child Care Development Fund (45 C.F.R. Part 98), and these Outdoor Preschool Pilot Standards; and
  - (d) The child care or early learning program must be offered on a regular and ongoing basis for one or more pre-school aged children not related to the licensee. For purposes of these Outdoor Preschool Pilot Standards, the individuals listed in RCW 43.216.010(2)(a) are considered related to the licensee.
- (2) The department must not license a department employee or a member of the employee's household if the employee is involved directly, or in an administrative or supervisory capacity in the:
- (a) Licensing process;
  - (b) Placement of a child in a licensed outdoor preschool program; or
  - (c) Authorization of payment for the child in care.

#### 0015 Licensee absence.

- (1) In an outdoor preschool early learning program, the licensee must have a written plan for when the director, assistant director, and program supervisor will be simultaneously absent but the program remains open for the care of children. If the director, assistant director, and program supervisor are simultaneously absent for more than ten consecutive operating days, an outdoor preschool provider must submit a written notification to the department and each child's parent or guardian at least two business days prior to the planned absence.
- (2) A written notification under this section must include the following information:
  - (a) The time period of the absence;
  - (b) Emergency contact information for the absent outdoor preschool provider; and
  - (c) A written plan for program staff to follow that includes:
    - i. A staffing plan that meets child-to-staff ratios;
    - ii. Identification of a lead teacher to be present and in charge;
    - iii. Outdoor preschool program staff roles and responsibilities;
    - iv. How each child's needs will be met during the absence; and
    - v. The responsibility for meeting licensing requirements.
- (3) If a facility licensing compliance agreement (FLCA) is developed as a result of outdoor preschool program staff failing to comply with licensing regulations during an absence described in this section, an outdoor preschool provider must:
  - (a) Retrain outdoor preschool program staff on the standards documented on the FLCA; and
  - (b) Document that the retraining occurred.

#### 0016 Inactive status—Voluntary and temporary closure.

- (1) If an outdoor preschool licensee plans to temporarily close their outdoor preschool program for more than thirty calendar days, and this closure is a departure from the program's regular schedule, an outdoor preschool provider must submit a notification to go on inactive status to the department at least two business days prior to the planned closure. Notifications for inactive status must include:
  - (a) The date the outdoor preschool program will cease operating;
  - (b) The reasons why the licensee is going on inactive status; and
  - (c) A projected date the outdoor preschool program will reopen.



- (2) The requirements of this section do not apply to licensed outdoor preschool programs that have temporary closures beyond thirty calendar days as part of their regular schedule, such as programs based on the school year or seasonal occupation.
- (3) A licensee may not request inactive status during their first initial licensing period (six months) unless for an emergency.
- (4) An outdoor preschool provider must inform parents and guardians that the program will temporarily close.
- (5) An outdoor preschool provider is responsible for notifying the department of changes to program status including voluntary closures, new household members or staff, or other program changes. Program status updates must also be completed in the department's electronic system.
- (6) Background check rules in chapter 110-06 WAC, including allegations of child abuse or neglect, will remain in effect during inactive status.
- (7) After receiving a notice of inactive status, the department will:
  - (a) Place the license on inactive status;
  - (b) Inform the licensee that the license is inactive; and
  - (c) Notify the following programs of the inactive status:
    - i. The department's child care subsidy programs;
    - ii. USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP); and
    - iii. Early achievers, ECEAP, Head Start Grantee, and child care aware of Washington.
- (8) A licensee is still responsible for maintaining annual compliance requirements during inactive status pursuant to RCW 43.216.305.
- (9) If inactive status exceeds six months within a twelve-month period, the department must close the license for failing to comply with RCW 43.216.305(2). The licensee must reapply for licensing pursuant to RCW 43.216.305(3).
- (10) The department may pursue enforcement actions after three failed attempts to monitor an outdoor preschool program if:
  - (a) The outdoor preschool provider has not been available to permit the monitoring visits;
  - (b) The monitoring visits were attempted within a three-month span to the monitoring due date; and
  - (c) The department attempted to contact the provider by phone during the third attempted visit while still on the outdoor preschool premises.
- (11) When a licensee is ready to reopen after a temporary closure, the licensee must notify the department in writing. After receiving notice of the intent to reopen, the department will:
  - (a) Conduct a health and safety visit of the outdoor preschool program within ten business days to determine that the provider is in compliance with these standards;
  - (b) Activate the license and inform the licensee that the license is active; and
  - (c) Notify the following programs of the active status:
    - i. The department's child care subsidy programs;
    - ii. CACFP; and
    - iii. Early achievers, ECEAP, Head Start Grantee, and child care aware of Washington.

### 0030 Nondiscrimination.

- (1) Early learning programs are defined by state and federal law as places of public accommodation that must:
  - (a) Not discriminate in employment practices or client services based on race, creed, ethnicity, national origin, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, or ability; and
  - (b) Comply with the requirements of the Washington law against discrimination (chapter 49.60 RCW) and the ADA.
- (2) An outdoor preschool program must have a written nondiscrimination policy addressing at least the factors listed in subsection (1) of this section.

## CHILD OUTCOMES

### 0055 Developmental screening and communication to parents or guardians.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must inform parents or guardians about the importance of developmental screenings for each child from birth through age five.
- (2) If not conducted on-site, an outdoor preschool provider must share information with parents or guardians about organizations that conduct developmental screenings such as a local business, school district, health care provider, specialist, or resources listed on the department web site.

### 0065 School readiness and family engagement activities.

- (1) At least once per calendar year, the outdoor preschool provider must provide kindergarten or school readiness materials to the parents or guardians.
- (2) Kindergarten or school readiness materials must be the same or similar to resources posted online by OSPI, the department, or other equivalent organizations. These materials may address:
  - (a) Kindergarten transition activities, if applicable; and
  - (b) Developmentally appropriate local school and school district activities designed to engage families.

## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

### 0080 Family support self-assessment.

An outdoor preschool provider must assess their program within one year of being licensed to identify ways to support the families of enrolled children. A provider must complete the strengthening families program self-assessment, or an equivalent assessment, applicable to the early learning program type.

### 0085 Family partnerships and communication.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must communicate with families to identify individual children's developmental goals.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must attempt to obtain information from each child's family about that child's developmental, behavioral, health, linguistic, cultural, social, and other relevant information. The provider must make this attempt upon that child's enrollment and annually thereafter.

- (3) An outdoor preschool provider must determine how the program can best accommodate each child's individual characteristics, strengths, and needs. The provider must utilize the information in subsection (2) of this section and seek input from family members and staff familiar with a child's behavior, developmental, and learning patterns.
- (4) An outdoor preschool provider must:
  - (a) Attempt to discuss with parents or guardians information including, but not limited to:
    - i. A child's strength in areas of development, health issues, special needs, and other concerns;
    - ii. Family routines or events, approaches to parenting, family beliefs, culture, language, and child rearing practices;
    - iii. Internal transitions within the outdoor preschool program and transitions to external services or programs, as necessary;
    - iv. Collaboration between the provider and the parent or guardian in behavior management; and
    - v. A child's progress, at least two times per year.
  - (b) Communicate the importance of regular attendance for the child;
  - (c) Give parents or guardians contact information for questions or concerns;
  - (d) Give families opportunities to share their language and culture in the outdoor preschool program;
  - (e) Arrange a confidential time and space for individual conversations regarding children, as needed;
  - (f) Allow parents or guardians access to their child during normal hours of operation, except as excluded by a court order; and
  - (g) Communicate verbally or in writing:
    - i. Changes in drop-off and pickup arrangements as needed; and
    - ii. Daily activities.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, TRAINING AND REQUIREMENTS

### 0100 General staff qualifications.

- (1) Outdoor preschool early learning program licensees must meet the requirements of an outdoor preschool director, listed in subsection 2 of this section, or hire an outdoor preschool director who meets the qualifications prior to being granted an initial license. Outdoor preschool licensees who fulfill the role of outdoor preschool director in their early learning program must complete all trainings and requirements for outdoor preschool directors.
- (2) **Outdoor preschool directors or assistant directors** manage the outdoor preschool program and set appropriate program, and staff expectations.
  - (a) An outdoor preschool director must meet the following qualifications:
    - i. Be at least eighteen years old;
    - ii. Have an ECE state certificate and environmental education training or equivalent as approved and verified in the electronic workforce registry by the department as follows:
      - (A) An outdoor preschool director working at the time of initial licensing of the outdoor preschool program must complete an ECE state certificate and environmental education training or equivalent within five years of August 1, 2019;

- (B) An outdoor preschool director hired or promoted after August 1, 2019 must have an ECE state certificate and environmental education training or equivalent at the time of hire.
  - iii. Have two years of experience as a teacher of preschool-age children and at least six months of experience in administration or management or a department approved plan;
  - iv. Pursuant to standard 0105, complete the applicable preservice requirements;
  - v. If an outdoor preschool director does not meet the minimum qualification requirements, the outdoor preschool program must employ an assistant director or program supervisor who meets the minimum qualifications of these positions;
  - vi. Have their continued professional development progress documented annually.
- (b) An outdoor preschool assistant director must meet the following qualifications:
- i. Be at least eighteen years old;
  - ii. Have an ECE state certificate and environmental education training or equivalent as approved and verified in the electronic workforce registry by the department as follows:
    - (A) An outdoor preschool assistant director working at the time of initial licensing of the outdoor preschool program must complete an ECE state certificate and environmental education training or equivalent within five years of August 1, 2019;
    - (B) An outdoor preschool assistant director hired or promoted after August 1, 2019 must have an ECE state certificate and environmental education training or equivalent at the time of hire.
  - iii. Have two years of experience as a teacher of children in any age group enrolled in the outdoor preschool program or two years of experience in administration or management, or a department approved plan;
  - iv. Pursuant to standard 0105, complete the applicable preservice requirements;
  - v. Have their continued professional development progress documented annually.
- (c) An outdoor preschool director or assistant director or equivalent must provide the following services:
- i. For a period of fifty percent or more of the weekly operation hours or up to forty hours per week the director or assistant director must be on-site for the daily operation of the outdoor preschool program, or be available to provide in-person support to the outdoor program within fifteen minutes of a request for support. On-site duties may include providing oversight, as-needed support for children and staff, and providing family engagement services. If the director or assistant director is unable to comply with the fifty percent rule described in this subsection the director or assistant director must designate a person with the qualifications of an assistant director, program supervisor, or equivalent qualifications, to comply with the requirements of this subsection.
  - ii. An outdoor preschool director may act as a substitute teacher if acting as a substitute does not interfere with management or supervisory responsibilities;



- iii. Comply with these standards;
  - iv. Develop a curriculum philosophy, communicate the philosophy to all outdoor preschool program staff and parents, and train staff to ensure the philosophy serves all children in the outdoor preschool program (or designate a program supervisor with this responsibility);
  - v. Lead the development of benefit-risk assessments, and associated risk management policies and procedures, pursuant to standard 0471.
  - vi. Have knowledge of community resources available to families, including resources for children with special needs and be able to share these resources with families; and
  - vii. Oversee professional development plans for outdoor preschool program staff including, but not limited to:
    - (A) Providing support to staff for creating and maintaining staff records;
    - (B) Setting educational goals with staff and locating or coordinating state-approved training opportunities for staff; and
    - (C) Observing and mentoring staff.
- (3) **Outdoor preschool program supervisors** plan the outdoor preschool program services under the oversight of a director or assistant director.
- (a) A program supervisor must meet the following qualifications:
    - i. Be at least eighteen years old;
    - ii. If a director or assistant director has an ECE state certificate and environmental education training or equivalent as approved and verified in the electronic workforce registry by the department as follows:
      - (A) A program supervisor must complete an ECE state certificate and environmental education training or equivalent within five years of the date of initial licensing of the outdoor preschool program or from the date of hire or promotion, whichever is later;
      - (B) A program supervisor at the time of hire or promotion must have an ECE state certificate if the director or assistant director does not have an ECE state certificate.
      - (C) A program supervisor at the time of hire or promotion must have environmental education training if the director or assistant director does not have environmental education training.
    - iii. Have two years of experience as a teacher of preschool children in a nature-based early learning program;
    - iv. Pursuant to standard 0105, complete the applicable preservice requirements; and
    - v. Have their continued professional development progress documented annually.
  - (b) A program supervisor performs the following duties:
    - i. Guide the planning of curriculum philosophy, implementation, and environmental design of the outdoor preschool program;
    - ii. Comply with these standards;
    - iii. Act as a teacher or director as long as it does not interfere with the program supervisor's primary responsibilities; and
    - iv. Manage the professional development plans and requirements for staff as needed.

- (c) One person may be the director, assistant director, and the program supervisor when qualified for all positions, provided that all requirements of subsection (1)(a) and (1)(b) of this section are met.
- (4) **Lead teachers** are responsible for implementing the outdoor preschool early learning program. Lead teachers develop and provide a nurturing and responsive learning environment that meets the needs of enrolled children.
  - (a) A lead teacher must meet the following qualifications:
    - i. Be at least eighteen years old;
    - ii. Have a high school diploma or equivalent; and
    - iii. Pursuant to standard 0105, complete the applicable preservice requirements.
  - (b) During all operating hours when children are present and when the director, assistant director, or program supervisor are on-site, an outdoor preschool lead teacher must meet the following requirements:
    - i. Have an ECE initial certificate or equivalent as approved and verified in the electronic workforce registry by the department within five years of August 1, 2019, or five years from being employed or promoted into this position at any licensed early learning program;
    - ii. Progress towards an ECE short certificate or equivalent. An outdoor preschool lead teacher hired after August 1, 2019 must have an ECE short certificate within two years of receiving an ECE initial certificate, or seven years from being employed or promoted into this position at any licensed early learning program; and
    - iii. Have their professional development progress documented annually.
  - (c) During all operating hours when children are present and when the director, assistant director, or program supervisor are not on-site, an outdoor preschool lead teacher must meet the following requirements:
    - i. Have an ECE initial certificate and environmental education training, or equivalent as approved and verified in the electronic workforce registry by the department;
    - ii. Have two years of experience as a teacher of preschool children in a nature-based early learning program; and
    - iii. Progress towards an ECE short certificate or equivalent. An outdoor preschool lead teacher hired after August 1, 2019 must have an ECE short certificate within two years of receiving an ECE initial certificate, or seven years from being employed or promoted into this position at any licensed early learning program; and
    - iv. Have their professional development progress documented annually.
- (5) **Assistant teachers** help a lead teacher or licensee provide instructional support to children and implement developmentally appropriate programs in outdoor preschool programs.
  - (a) An assistant teacher must meet the following qualifications:
    - i. Be at least eighteen years old;
    - ii. Have a high school diploma or equivalent; and
    - iii. Have a minimum of an ECE initial certificate or equivalent as approved and verified in the electronic workforce registry by the department within five years of August 1, 2019, or from being employed or promoted to this position at any licensed early learning program;

- iv. Pursuant to standard 0105, complete the applicable preservice requirements; and
  - v. Have their professional development progress documented annually.
- (b) Assistant teachers may work alone with children with regular, scheduled, and documented oversight and on-the-job classroom training from the classroom's assigned lead teacher who is primarily responsible for the care of the same group of children for the majority of their day.
- (c) For continuity of care, assistant teachers can act as a substitute lead teacher up to two weeks. If longer than two weeks, the provider must notify the department with a plan to manage the classroom. Outdoor preschool assistant teachers may act as substitute lead teacher only if meeting the following requirements:
  - i. Have at least one year of experience teaching in an outdoor preschool; and
  - ii. Have a minimum ECE Initial certificate or equivalent as approved by the department.
- (6) **Aides** provide classroom support to an assistant teacher, lead teacher, program supervisor, center director, assistant director, or family home licensee. Aides must meet the following qualifications:
  - (a) Be at least fourteen years old.
  - (b) Have a high school diploma or equivalent, or be currently enrolled in high school or an equivalent education program;
  - (c) Pursuant to standard 0105, complete the applicable preservice requirements;
  - (d) Have their professional development progress documented annually; and
  - (e) Aides may be counted in the staff-to-child ratio if they are working under the continuous oversight of a lead teacher, program supervisor, center director, assistant director, assistant teacher, or family home licensee, and:
    - i. Aides working nineteen hours per month or less can count towards ratio with applicable preservice requirements pursuant to standard 0105, and without in-service training requirements pursuant to standard 0107 (1)(a).
    - ii. Aides who work twenty hours or more per month with a cumulative twelve months of employment must complete applicable preservice requirements pursuant to standard 0105, and in-service training pursuant to standard 0107 (1)(a).
    - iii. For outdoor preschools, aides may only count in ratio if they are at least 18 years old.
- (7) **Other personnel** who do not directly care for children and are not listed in subsections (1) through (5) of this section must meet the following qualifications:
  - (a) Complete and pass a background check, pursuant to chapter 110-06 WAC;
  - (b) Pursuant to standard 0105, have a negative TB test; and
  - (c) Pursuant to standard 0110, complete program based staff policies and training.
- (8) **Volunteers** help at outdoor preschool programs. Volunteers must meet the following qualifications:
  - (a) Be at least fourteen years old (volunteers must have written permission to volunteer from their parent or guardian if they are under eighteen years old);
  - (b) Work under the continuous oversight of a lead teacher, program supervisor, center director, assistant director, assistant teacher, or family home licensee;
  - (c) Regular, ongoing volunteers may count in staff-to-child ratio if they:
    - i. Are at least eighteen years old, for outdoor preschools;
    - ii. Pursuant to chapter 110-06 WAC, complete and pass a background check

- iii. Pursuant to standard 0105, complete a TB test;
- iv. Pursuant to standard 0106, complete the training requirements;
- v. Pursuant to standard 0110, complete program based staff policies and training; and
- vi. Have their professional development progress documented annually.
- vii. Occasional volunteers must comply with subsections (7)(a) and (7)(b) of this section. Occasional volunteers may include, but are not limited to, a parent or guardian helping on a field trip, special guest presenters, or a parent or guardian, family member, or community member helping with a cultural celebration.

### 0105 Preservice requirements.

- (1) All applicants, coapplicants, outdoor early learning program licensees (RCW 43.216.740), directors, assistant directors, and program supervisors must complete a department provided orientation for the applicable early learning program. Prior to being in charge of the early learning program fifty percent of the time or more, those newly promoted or assuming a role of one of the roles listed here must complete or be registered in orientation training.
- (2) Outdoor preschool providers must complete a department background check, pursuant to chapter 170-06 WAC.
- (3) Outdoor preschool providers, including volunteers, must provide documentation signed within the last twelve months by a licensed health care professional of tuberculosis (TB) testing or treatment consisting of:
  - (a) A negative TB symptom screen and negative TB risk assessment;
  - (b) A previous positive FDA-approved TB test and a current negative chest radiograph and documentation of clearance to safely work in an outdoor preschool program; or
  - (c) A positive symptom screening or a positive risk assessment with documentation of:
    - i. A current negative FDA-approved TB test;
    - ii. A previous or current positive FDA-approved TB test; and
    - iii. A current negative chest radiograph and documentation of clearance to safely work or reside in an early learning program.
- (4) Upon notification of TB exposure, early learning providers may be required to be retested for TB as directed by the local health jurisdiction.

### 0106 Training requirements.

- (1) Outdoor preschool providers must complete the training requirements contained in subsections (4) through (10) of this section within three months of the date of the date of initial licensing of the outdoor preschool program or the date of hire, whichever is later, and prior to working in an unsupervised capacity with children.
- (2) Outdoor preschool license applicants and outdoor preschool providers must register with the electronic workforce registry prior to being granted an initial license or working with children in an unsupervised capacity.
- (3) License applicants, directors, assistant directors, program supervisors, lead teachers, assistant teachers, and aides must complete the outdoor preschool child care basics training as approved or offered by the department:
  - (a) Prior to being granted a license;
  - (b) Prior to working unsupervised with children; or



- (c) Within three months of the date the outdoor preschool child care basics training becomes available if already employed or being promoted to a new role.
- (4) Outdoor preschool providers must complete the recognizing and reporting suspected child abuse, neglect, and exploitation training as approved or offered by the department according to subsection (1) of this section. Training must include the prevention of child abuse or neglect and the mandatory reporting requirements under RCW 26.44.030.
- (5) Outdoor preschool providers must complete the emergency preparedness training as approved or offered by the department (applicable to the early learning program where they work or volunteer) according to subsection (1) of this section.
- (6) Outdoor preschool providers must complete the serving children experiencing homelessness training as approved or offered by the department according to subsection (1) of this section.
- (7) Outdoor preschool directors, assistant directors, program supervisors, lead teachers, and other appropriate staff members must complete the child restraint training as approved or offered by the department. This training must be completed annually; and:
  - (a) Pursuant to standard 0335, training must be completed prior to being authorized to restrain an enrolled child; or
  - (b) Pursuant to the requirements contained in subsection (1) of this section.
- (8) Outdoor preschool directors, assistant directors, program supervisors, and lead teachers must complete the medication management and administration training as approved or offered by the department prior to giving medication to an enrolled child, or as indicated in subsection (1) of this section.
- (9) Outdoor preschool providers who directly care for children must complete the prevention of exposure to blood and body fluids training that meets Washington state department of labor and industries' requirements prior to being granted a license or working with children. This training must be repeated pursuant to Washington state department of labor and industries regulations.
- (10) Outdoor preschool providers must have a current first-aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certification prior to being alone with children. Outdoor preschool providers must ensure that at least one staff person with a current first-aid and CPR certificate is present with each group of children at all times. Unless otherwise approved by the Department, if operating more than thirty minutes from emergency medical care, including the time it would take an adult to walk from the trailhead to a potential location, outdoor preschool providers must ensure that at least one staff person with a current Wilderness First Aid and CPR certificate is present with each group of children.
  - (a) Proof of certification may be a card, certificate, or instructor letter.
  - (b) The first-aid and CPR training and certification must:
    - i. Be delivered in person and include a hands-on component for first aid and CPR demonstrated in front of an instructor certified by the American Red Cross, American Heart Association, American Safety and Health Institute, or other nationally recognized certification program;
    - ii. Include child and adult CPR; and
    - iii. Infant CPR, if applicable.
- (11) Outdoor preschool providers who prepare or serve food to children at an outdoor preschool program must obtain a current food worker card prior to preparing or serving food. Food worker cards must:
  - (a) Be obtained online or through the local health jurisdiction; and
  - (b) Be renewed prior to expiring.

### 0107 In-service training.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must complete ten hours of annual in-service training after twelve months of cumulative employment.
- (2) In-service training requirements under this standard (Standard 0107) may be met by completing college courses that align with the Washington state core competencies. These courses must be delivered by a postsecondary institution and approved by the department.
- (3) Only five in-service training hours may be carried over from one fiscal year to the next fiscal year.

### 0110 Program based staff policies and training.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must have and follow written policies for outdoor preschool program staff. Staff policies must include those listed in subsections (2) and (3) of this section and must be reviewed and approved by the department prior to issuing a provider's initial license. Providers must notify the department when substantial changes are made.
- (2) Outdoor preschool program staff policies must include, but are not limited to:
  - (a) All of the information in the parent or guardian handbook except fees;
  - (b) Job descriptions, pay dates, and benefits;
  - (c) Professional development expectations and plans;
  - (d) Expectations for attendance and conduct;
  - (e) Outdoor preschool program staff responsibilities for:
    - i. Child supervision requirements, including preventing children's access to unlicensed space;
    - ii. Child growth and development;
    - iii. Developmentally appropriate curriculum;
    - iv. Teacher-child interaction;
    - v. Child protection, guidance, and discipline techniques;
    - vi. Food service practices;
    - vii. Off-site field trips, if applicable;
    - viii. Transporting children, if applicable;
    - ix. Health, safety, and sanitization procedures;
    - x. Medication management procedures;
    - xi. Medical emergencies, fire, disaster evacuation and emergency preparedness plans;
    - xii. Mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse, neglect, and exploitation, per RCW 26.44.020 and 26.44.030 and all other reporting requirements;
    - xiii. Implementation of child's individual health care or special needs plan;
    - xiv. Following nonsmoking, vaping, alcohol and drug regulations;
    - xv. Religious, equity and cultural responsiveness;
    - xvi. Partnering with the local Native American tribe(s);
    - xvii. Nondiscrimination;
    - xviii. Planned daily activities and routines.
    - xix. Outdoor preschool benefit-risk assessment, policies, and procedures, if applicable.
    - xx. Outdoor preschool toileting options, as applicable.
  - (f) Staff responsibilities if the outdoor preschool director, assistant director, or program supervisor is absent from the outdoor preschool program;

- (g) A plan that includes how both administrative and child caretaking duties are met when a job requires such dual responsibilities; and
- (h) Observation, evaluation, and feedback policies.
- (3) An outdoor preschool provider must have and follow written policies requiring staff working, transitioning, or covering breaks with the same classroom or group of children to share applicable information with each other on a daily basis regarding:
  - (a) A child's health needs, allergies and medication;
  - (b) Any change in a child's daily schedule;
  - (c) Significant educational or developmental information;
  - (d) Any communications from the family; and
  - (e) Information to be shared with the family.
- (4) An outdoor preschool provider must develop, deliver, and document the delivery of outdoor preschool staff training specific to the outdoor preschool program and premises.
  - (a) Training topics must include:
    - i. Staff policies listed in subsections (2) and (3) of this section;
    - ii. RCW 43.216.740;
    - iii. These Outdoor Preschool Pilot Standards; and
    - iv. 110-06 WAC.
  - (b) Training must be updated with changes in program policies and state or federal regulations.

#### 0111 Staff oversight.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider who oversees staff must:
  - (a) Establish a work plan with clear expectations;
  - (b) Be aware of what staff members are doing; and
  - (c) Be available and able to respond in an emergency as needed to protect the health and safety of children in care.
- (2) When the outdoor preschool director, assistant director, program supervisor, lead teacher, or assistant teacher is the only staff supervising an aide or volunteer, the aide or volunteer may be out of the supervisor's visual and auditory range only when the aide, volunteer or supervisor is attending to personal needs.

#### 0115 Staff Records

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must establish a records system for themselves, staff, and volunteers that complies with the requirements of these Outdoor Preschool Pilot Standards. Outdoor preschool program staff records must be:
  - (a) Verified by the licensee, center or outdoor preschool director, assistant director, or program supervisor;
  - (b) Entered and maintained in the electronic workforce registry, if applicable. Paper records may be discarded once entered into the electronic workforce registry and confirmed by the department;
  - (c) Updated to delete staff names from the electronic workforce registry when no longer employed at the outdoor preschool program; and
  - (d) Kept on-site or in the program's administrative office in a manner that allows the department to review the records.
- (2) Records for each outdoor preschool provider and staff member must include:
  - (a) First and last name;
  - (b) Date of birth;
  - (c) Job title;

- (d) First and last day of employment;
  - (e) Pursuant to standards 0100 through 0110, proof of professional credentials, requirements, and training for each outdoor preschool staff member.
- (3) A licensee, director, assistant director, or program supervisor must maintain in a confidential manner the records described in this subsection for each outdoor preschool provider and staff. These records must be reviewable by the department and must include at a minimum:
- (a) A copy of current government issued photo identification;
  - (b) Emergency contact information;
  - (c) Completed employment application or resume;
  - (d) Annual observation, evaluation, and feedback information; and
  - (e) The licensee's Social Security number, federal EIN, or a written document stating the licensee does not possess either.

#### 0120 Providing for personal, professional, and health needs of staff.

- (1) A licensee must provide for the personal and professional needs of staff by:
  - (a) Having a secure place to store personal belongings that is inaccessible to children;
  - (b) Having a readily accessible phone to use for emergency calls or to contact the parents of enrolled children;
  - (c) Providing file and storage space for professional materials; and
  - (d) Providing for the toileting needs of outdoor preschool staff pursuant to the programs' toileting options policy.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must be excluded from the outdoor preschool premises when that provider's illness or condition poses a risk of spreading a harmful disease or compromising the health and safety of others. The illnesses and conditions that require a staff member to be excluded are pursuant to standard 0205.
- (3) If a staff person has not been vaccinated, or has not shown documented immunity to a vaccine preventable disease, that person may be required by the local health jurisdiction or the department to remain off-site during an outbreak of a contagious disease, as defined in WAC 246-110-010.
- (4) An outdoor preschool program's health policy must be consistent with WAC 246-110-0020, and pursuant to standard 0500, must include provisions for excluding or separating from the outdoor preschool program any children, staff, or volunteers who are infectious, or exposed and susceptible to a contagious disease.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Space and Furnishings

#### 0130 Indoor early learning and permanently located outdoor classroom program space.

- (1) Outdoor preschool providers utilizing indoor licensed center or family-home early learning program space must meet all applicable licensing requirements, and the indoor early learning program space must be accessible to the provider and children during program operating hours.
- (2) Center or family home early learning program space, ramps, and handrails must comply with, be accessible to, and accommodate children and adults with disabilities as required by the Washington law against discrimination (chapter 49.60 RCW) and the ADA.
- (3) Indoor early learning program and permanently located outdoor classroom space must allow children to move between areas without disrupting another child's work or play.



### 0135 Routine care, play, learning, relaxation, and comfort.

- (1) An outdoor preschool program operating with a permanently located outdoor classroom must have accessible and child-size furniture and equipment in sufficient quantity for the number of children in care. Outdoor preschools may use picnic benches in sufficient quantity for the number of children in care, with adaptations to support children as needed, or provide alternative seating and surface options, such as blankets or logs.
- (2) If utilized by an outdoor preschool, furniture and equipment must be:
  - (a) Maintained in a safe working condition;
  - (b) Developmentally and age appropriate;
  - (c) Visually inspected at least weekly for hazards, broken parts, or damage. All equipment with hazardous, broken parts, or damage must be repaired as soon as possible and must be inaccessible to children until repairs are made according to the manufacturer's instructions, if available. Natural materials of an outdoor, nature-based preschool, such as logs and trees, must be inspected and any hazards that are not a result of the natural quality of the material must be mitigated, such as the removal of broken limbs from climbing trees;
  - (d) Arranged in a way that does not interfere with other play equipment;
  - (e) Installed and assembled according to manufacturer's specifications;
  - (f) Stored in a manner to prevent injury; and
  - (g) Accessible to the child's height so that he or she can find, use, and return materials independently,
  - (h) Subsections (2)(a) through (2)(g) may not apply to outdoor preschools operating in public areas where the equipment is not the property of the outdoor preschool provider and not intended for the use of preschool-age children.
- (3) Outdoor preschools must provide and maintain a space that is suitable for comfort and relaxation, pursuant to standard 0140(2) and (5).

### 0140 Room arrangement, child-related displays, private space, and belongings.

- (1) Early learning materials and equipment must be visible, accessible to children in care, and must be arranged to promote and encourage independent access by children. For outdoor preschools to comply with this requirement, the outdoor natural environment must provide age and developmentally appropriate materials for children, consistent with the program's curriculum philosophy.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must offer or allow a child to create a place for privacy. This space must:
  - (a) Allow the provider to supervise children; and
  - (b) Include an area accessible to children who seek or need time alone or in small groups.
- (3) An outdoor preschool provider must have extra clothing available for children who wet, soil, or have a need to change clothes. Pursuant to standard 0147, the outdoor preschool must ensure that children have the appropriate clothing for the weather and must have extra clothing available for children whose parent or guardian did not provide the appropriate clothing.
- (4) An outdoor preschool provider must designate storage space for each child's belongings while the child is in attendance. At a minimum, the space must be:
  - (a) Accessible to the child; and
  - (b) Large enough and spaced sufficiently apart from other storage space to:
    - i. Store the child's personal articles and clothing; and
    - ii. Promote or encourage children to organize their possessions.

- (5) Child usable and accessible areas must be arranged, or selected by an outdoor preschool, to provide sufficient space for routine care, child play, and learning activities. These areas must be designed, or selected by an outdoor preschool, to:
  - (a) Allow the provider to supervise or actively supervise the children, depending on the nature of the activities;
  - (b) Allow children to move freely; and
  - (c) Allow for different types of activities at the same time (for example: gross motor activity, natural sciences, dramatic play, music and movement, language and literacy learning, manipulatives and loose parts, and environmental literacy opportunities).

#### 0145 Outdoor early learning program space and active play.

- (1) Outdoor preschool staff must inspect meeting spaces and permanently located outdoor classrooms or other commonly used spaces prior to children arriving, and have a method of addressing any hazards that become present in these or other spaces (such as, but not limited to, loose overhead branches, hazardous materials left in public spaces, or wildlife droppings).
- (2) Outdoor preschool program space must promote a variety of age and developmentally appropriate active play areas for children in care. Activities must encourage and promote both moderate and vigorous physical activity such as running, jumping, skipping, throwing, pedaling, pushing, pulling, kicking, and climbing.
- (3) Pursuant to standard 0358, outdoor preschools must have access to at least four-thousand square feet of natural space per child to support a nature-based curriculum.
  - (a) Within the four-thousand square feet of natural space the outdoor preschool provider must identify at least seventy-five square feet per child accessing the play space at any given time that is suitable for vigorous and active play and gross-motor activity.
  - (b) Pursuant to standard 0360, the outdoor preschool provider must ensure that the children are encouraged to engage in active play for at least thirty minutes of gross motor activity for every three hours the children are in attendance at the outdoor preschool.
- (4) An outdoor preschool program must have shaded areas in outdoor play space provided by trees, buildings, or shade structures. Pursuant to standard 0147, outdoor preschools engaging children in unshaded areas must notice and respond to the children's comfort and safety in all temperatures.
- (5) When moving between areas in the outdoor preschool program space, or when moving to and from a licensed indoor program space to the outdoor space, an outdoor preschool provider must identify and use safe routes and active supervision.
- (6) Outdoor preschools must meet the following requirements in their use of natural play spaces that are not enclosed by a fence, wall, or similar barrier:
  - (a) The outdoor preschool must establish boundaries with children in unenclosed spaces by using visual aids, such as webbing or tying ribbons on trees, in addition to the intentional teaching of boundaries to children required under standard 0310. These visual aids must not create a tripping, entrapment, or choking hazard.
  - (b) Outdoor preschools with permanently located outdoor classroom spaces must create barriers between children's play space and any immediately adjacent hazardous features, such as a ravine, cliff, road, or body of water not intended for water activity. These barriers may be made by natural materials and must be at least 22 inches tall. If public parks property used by an outdoor preschool does not meet these requirements, the provider must submit a supervision plan to the department.

- (7) An enclosed outdoor play area must meet licensing requirements of center or family home licensed childcare, unless otherwise stated in these standards to allow for a nature-based curriculum.

#### 0146 Equipment and surfaces in outdoor early learning space.

- (1) Outdoor preschool providers may allow children to climb natural features, such as trees or boulders, and pursuant to standard 0471 and standard 0315, must use benefit-risk assessments to determine the appropriate methods to mitigate the potential for injury. To prevent injury to children, outdoor preschool providers must comply with the following requirements:
  - (a) Outdoor preschool staff members must remove hazardous objects and mitigate hazards whenever possible from the surrounding area where children might fall, such as removing rocks or covering stumps with sharp edges; and
  - (b) Outdoor preschool staff members must provide active supervision, be able to provide immediate assistance, and at least one staff-member must at all times be within reach of the midriff of any child that is climbing a natural feature above a height that would normally require protective barriers according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) guidelines (as now and hereafter amended), or 30 inches above the ground for preschool-age children.
- (2) Outdoor preschools must not use or install playground equipment that does not comply with the following:
  - (a) Playground equipment used by an outdoor preschool provider must comply with applicable Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) guidelines (as now and hereafter amended) including, but not limited to, guidelines related to the installation, arrangement, design, construction, and maintenance of the outdoor play equipment and surface.
    - i. Climbing play equipment must not be placed on or above concrete, asphalt, packed soil, lumber, or similar hard surfaces;
    - ii. The ground under swings and play equipment must be covered by a shock absorbing material (grass alone is not an acceptable) such as:
      1. Pea gravel at least nine inches deep;
      2. Playground wood chips at least nine inches deep;
      3. Shredded recycled rubber at least six inches deep; or
      4. Any material that has a certificate of compliance, label, or documentation stating it meets ASTM standards F1292-13 and F2223-10.
  - (b) Permanently anchored outdoor play equipment must not be placed over septic tank areas or drain fields, and must be installed according to the manufacturer's directions.
  - (c) Handmade playground equipment must be maintained for safety or removed when no longer safe. Prior to construction of new handmade playground equipment, the provider must notify the department and have plans and a materials list available upon request.
  - (d) Bouncing equipment including, but not limited to, trampolines, rebounders and inflatable equipment must be inaccessible and locked. This requirement does not apply to bounce balls designed to be used by individual children.

#### 0147 Weather conditions and outdoor hazards.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must observe weather conditions and other possible hazards to take appropriate action for child health and safety. Conditions that pose a health or safety risk may include, but are not limited to:
  - (a) Heat in excess of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or pursuant to advice of the local authority;
  - (b) Cold less than 20 degrees Fahrenheit, or pursuant to advice of the local authority;
  - (c) Lightning storm, tornado, hurricane, or flooding if there is immediate or likely danger;
  - (d) Earthquake;
  - (e) Air quality emergency ordered by a local or state authority on air quality or public health;
  - (f) Lockdown notification ordered by a public safety authority; and
  - (g) Other similar incidents.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must dress children for weather conditions during outdoor program time. Outdoor preschools must ensure all children have appropriate clothing for the time spent outdoors and have extra clothing to meet children's comfort and safety needs throughout the day, as needed. This must include rainy or cold weather clothing such as waterproof boots, rain pants, rain jacket, a moisture-wicking layer, two sets of gloves, and a hat to keep the child's head dry and warm.
- (3) Outdoor preschools must have a required clothing policy or program to loan the appropriate equipment to children, which must be included in the parent or guardian handbook pursuant to standard 0471. Outdoor preschool providers must work with families that require assistance in meeting their child's clothing needs.
- (4) Outdoor preschool providers must remain aware of the children's verbal and non-verbal cues regarding their warmth and comfort and respond appropriately to ensure the children's health and safety. These responses may include, but are not limited to:
  - (a) Keeping children active and moving in cold weather;
  - (b) Resting in shaded areas to cool off; and
  - (c) Assisting children to remove or add layers of clothing, while supporting their development of self-regulation skills.

#### 0148 Gardens in outdoor early learning program space.

- (1) A garden in outdoor preschool program space must:
  - (a) Have safeguards in place to minimize risk of cross-contamination by animals;
  - (b) Use soil free from agricultural or industrial contaminants such as lead or arsenic if gardening directly in the ground;
  - (c) If gardening in raised beds:
    - i. Use new soil that is labeled "organic" or "safe for children" and was obtained from a gardening supply or other retail store; or
    - ii. Use composted soil made from material that is safe according to the Washington State University's Extension Master Gardener composting guidelines; and
    - iii. Use water that comes from a private well approved by the local health jurisdiction or from a public water system. An outdoor preschool provider must make water for gardens inaccessible to children if the provider uses irrigation water.



- (2) Garden beds must not be made of materials that leach chemicals into the soil including, but not limited to, wood treated with chromated copper arsenate, creosote or pentachlorophenol, reclaimed railroad ties, or tires.
- (3) Any herbicide or pesticide must be applied pursuant to the product manufacturer's directions. The product must not be applied while children are present. Children must not apply the product or have access to the garden during the manufacturer's prescribed waiting period following application.
- (4) Commonplace toxic plants or plants with poisonous leaves (for example: tomato, potato, or rhubarb) may be grown in the garden. An outdoor preschool provider must actively supervise children who are able to access a garden where commonplace toxic plants or plants with poisonous leaves are growing.

## ACTIVITIES

### 0150 Program and activities.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must supply children in care with early learning materials that are age and developmentally appropriate. For each age group of children in care, a provider must supply a variety of materials that satisfy individual, developmental, and cultural needs. Outdoor preschools that choose to supplement abundant natural resources with additional early learning materials in the outdoors must ensure those materials comply with the rules of this section. Early learning materials must be:
  - (a) Clean;
  - (b) Washable or disposable;
  - (c) Accommodating to a range of abilities of children in care;
  - (d) Available to children in care appropriate to a child's age and developmental level;
  - (e) Nonpoisonous and free of toxins. If an early learning provider is using prepackaged art materials, the materials must be labeled "non-toxic" and meet ASTM standard D-4236 as described in 16 C.F.R. 1500.14(b)(8)(i);
  - (f) In good and safe working condition;
  - (g) Accommodating to special needs of children in care; and
  - (h) Removed from the early learning program space once the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has recalled an item.
  - (i) Outdoor preschool programs that utilize an indoor early learning program space may provide natural materials to children to support the nature-based curriculum that, as organic matter, may not be able to meet the requirements described in subsections (1)(a) or (1)(b) of this section. For example decomposing logs or leaves. Such materials must be nonpoisonous and free of toxins; and when being used by the children, the children must be actively supervised.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must ensure a sufficient quantity and variety of materials to engage children in the outdoor preschool program (for example: Arts and crafts supplies, various textured materials, construction materials, manipulative materials, music and sound devices, and books). Outdoor preschool providers may choose to use natural materials for these purposes if sufficient in quantity and variety to engage children in the outdoor preschool program. Materials must:
  - (a) Encourage both active physical play and quiet play activities;
  - (b) Promote imagination and creativity;
  - (c) Promote language development and literacy skills;
  - (d) Promote numeracy (counting and numbers) and spatial ability;
  - (e) Encourage discovery and exploration; and
  - (f) Promote learning skills.

### 0155 Use of television, video, and computers.

If an outdoor preschool provider offers screen time to children in care:

- (1) The screen time available for each child:
  - (a) Must be educational, developmentally and age appropriate, nonviolent, and culturally sensitive; and
  - (b) Should be interactive with staff.
- (2) Children must not be required to participate in screen time activities. Alternative activities must be provided to children in care when screen time is offered.
- (3) Screen time must not occur during scheduled meals or snacks.
- (4) Total screen time must not exceed two and one-half hours per week for preschool-age children in full-day care (one and one-quarter hours per child in half-day care).

### 0160 Promoting diversity and belonging.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must provide culturally and racially diverse learning opportunities. Diverse learning opportunities must be demonstrated by the provider's curriculum, activities, and materials that represent all children, families, staff, and the local Native American tribe(s), such as:
  - (a) Diverse dolls, books, pictures, games, or materials that do not reinforce stereotypes;
  - (b) Diverse music from many cultures in children's primary languages; and
  - (c) A balance of different ethnic and cultural groups, ages, abilities, family styles, and genders.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must contact the local Native American tribe(s) to begin a partnership, recognizing tribal sovereignty and incorporating cultural materials or practices, as appropriate.
- (3) An outdoor preschool provider must provide learning opportunities that incorporate elements of tribally approved curriculum, such as Washington's Since Time Immemorial early learning curriculum (<https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/tribal-relations/since-time-immemorial>).
- (4) An outdoor preschool provider must intervene appropriately to stop biased behavior displayed by children or adults including, but not limited to:
  - (a) Redirecting an inappropriate conversation or behavior;
  - (b) Being aware of situations that may involve bias and responding appropriately; and
  - (c) Refusing to ignore bias.

## SAFETY

### 0165 Safety requirements.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must keep indoor and outdoor early learning program space, materials, and equipment free from hazards and in safe working condition. Hazards inherent to the natural physical features of the outdoors must be mitigated according to the requirements contained in these standards. Equipment and toys used by the outdoor program must be compliant with the Consumer Product Safety Commission's (CPSC) guidelines, or the ASTM standards. Playground equipment and surfaces must comply with the requirements described in standard 0146.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must take steps to prevent hazards to children including, but not limited to:

- (a) Pursuant to RCW 43.216.380, eliminating and not using in the licensed space any window blinds or other window coverings with pull cords or inner cords capable of forming a loop and posing a risk of strangulation to children.
    - i. Window blinds and other window coverings that have been manufactured or properly retrofitted in a manner that eliminates the formation of loops posing a risk of strangulation are allowed; and
    - ii. A window covering must not be secured to the frame of a window or door used as an emergency exit in a way that would prevent the window or door from opening easily.
  - (b) Making inaccessible to children straps, strings, cords, wires, or similar items capable of forming a loop around a child's neck that are not used during supervised outdoor preschool program activities;
  - (c) Making inaccessible to children plastic bags and other suffocation hazards;
  - (d) Ensuring firearms, guns, weapons, and ammunition are not on the premises of an outdoor preschool program. Firearms, guns, weapons, and ammunition on the premises of a family home early learning program with an outdoor preschool program component must be stored in a locked gun safe or locked room inaccessible to children. If stored in a locked room, each gun must be stored unloaded and with a trigger lock or other disabling device. The locked room must be inaccessible to children at all times;
  - (e) Preventing children from walking into or through a glass door, window, or other glass barrier, by placing stickers or art work at the children's eye level on the glass; and
  - (f) Indoor climbing structures must not be placed next to windows, to prevent harm from shattered glass, unless the window is made of safety glass.
- (3) An outdoor preschool provider must take steps to prevent hazards to children in care, including hazards inherent to the natural physical features of the outdoors. Pursuant to standard 0471, such inherent hazards must be mitigated or lessened by close supervision, and the implementation of benefit-risk assessments and risk management plans. In addition, the outdoor preschool provider must take the following measures to prevent hazards to children in care:
- (a) **Cuts, abrasions, and punctures.** Equipment, materials, and other objects on the premises that have sharp edges, protruding nails, bolts, or other dangers must be repaired, removed, or made inaccessible to children. Outdoor preschools utilizing natural wooden materials in furniture or learning resources must utilize appropriate supervision or adequate management, such as sanding sharp edges.
  - (b) **Burns.** Equipment, materials, or products that may be hot enough to injure a child must be made inaccessible to children. Pursuant to standard 0351, children in outdoor preschools may have access to campfires.
  - (c) **Sheering, crushing, or pinching.** Broken or cracked equipment, materials, and objects must be repaired, removed, or made inaccessible to children;
  - (d) **Entrapment.** Freezers, refrigerators, washers, dryers, compost bins, and other entrapment dangers must be inaccessible to children unless being actively supervised;
  - (e) **Tripping.** Tripping hazards such as uneven walkways, damaged flooring or carpeting, or other tripping hazards must be removed or repaired;
  - (f) **Falling objects.** Large objects that pose a risk of falling or tipping must be securely anchored. Large objects include, but are not limited to, televisions, dressers, bookshelves, wall cabinets, sideboards or hutches, and wall units; and

- (g) **Equipment in poor condition.** Equipment in poor condition (rusty parts, flaking paint, or other dangers) must be repaired, removed, or made inaccessible to children.
- (4) An outdoor preschool operating an indoor childcare center program or family home program must comply with the following licensing space standards and requirements:
- (a) **Indoor temperatures for the premises.** The temperature of indoor early learning program space must be between sixty-five and eighty-two degrees Fahrenheit. If indoor licensed space is colder than sixty-five or hotter than eighty-two degrees Fahrenheit, an early learning provider must use climate control devices that are inaccessible to children to bring the temperature within the required range.
  - (b) **Window openings.** Windows within the reach of children must only open up to three and one-half inches or have some barrier or preventative measure to discourage children from exiting through the window;
  - (c) **Licensed space lighting.** Indoor early learning program space must have natural or artificial light that provides appropriate illumination for early learning program activities and supervision. An outdoor preschool provider operating on private land must comply with all light fixture manufacturers' installation and use requirements, and must also ensure compliance with the following requirements:
    - i. Light fixtures must have shatter-resistant covers or light bulbs;
    - ii. Lights or light fixtures used indoors must be designed for indoor use only;
    - iii. Free standing lamps must be attached or secured to prevent tipping; and
    - iv. Halogen lamps and bulbs are prohibited.
  - (d) **Safe noise levels.** Noise levels must be maintained at a level in which a normal conversation may occur;
  - (e) **Safe water temperature.** All water accessible to enrolled children must not be hotter than one-hundred and twenty degrees Fahrenheit;
  - (f) **Stairway safety.**
    - i. There must not be clutter or obstructions in the stairway;
    - ii. Pursuant to chapter 19.27 RCW all stairways (indoor and outdoor), not including play structures, must comply with all building code requirements. Outdoor Preschools operating in public parks where park features are pre-established, teachers must use benefit-risk assessments for using stair structures.
      - (A) Open stairways with no walls on either side must have handrails with slats (balusters) that prevent a child from falling off either side of the stairway.
      - (B) Stairways with a wall on only one side must have a handrail with slats (balusters) on the side without the wall that prevents a child from falling off the stairway.
      - (C) Stairways with a wall on both sides must have a handrail no higher than thirty-eight inches on at least one side of the stairway.
    - iii. Openings between slats on pressure or safety gates must not be large enough to allow a sphere that is three and one-half inches wide to pass through.
  - (g) **Platforms and decks.** Pursuant to chapter 19.27 RCW, all platforms and decks used for child care activities must comply with all building codes. All platforms and decks with a drop zone of more than eighteen inches must have guardrails in sections without steps.



- (h) **Electrical requirements.** To ensure a safe environment for children in care, an outdoor preschool provider must comply with the following electrical requirements:
- i. In areas accessible to children, electrical outlets must have automatic shutters that only allow electrical plugs to be inserted (tamper-resistant) or that are covered by blank plates or other tamper-resistant covers appropriate to the electrical outlet;
  - ii. Outlets near sinks, tubs, toilets, or other water sources must be inaccessible to children or be tamper-resistant and equipped with a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) outlet type;
  - iii. Electrical cords must be in good working condition, not torn or frayed, and not have any exposed wires;
  - iv. Electrical cords must be plugged directly into a wall outlet or a surge protector;
  - v. Power strips with surge protectors may be used but must not be accessible to children in care;
  - vi. Extension cords may only be used for a brief, temporary purpose and must not replace direct wiring; and
  - vii. Electrical devices accessible to children must not be plugged into an electrical outlet near a water source such as sink, tub, water table, or swimming pool.
  - viii. For outdoor Preschools operating in public parks where park features are pre-established, teachers must use benefit-risk assessments for using areas with access to electricity.

#### 0166 Emergency preparation and exiting.

- (1) To be properly prepared for an emergency, an outdoor preschool program must have an emergency preparedness plan pursuant to standard 0470.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must have the following in case of an emergency:
  - (a) A working flashlight or other emergency lighting device must be available for use as an emergency light source. Battery powered flashlights must have an extra set of batteries easily available; and
  - (b) A working telephone must be available for use with sufficient backup power to function for at least five hours.
- (3) To ensure a safe exit from indoor premises during an emergency, outdoor preschools must comply with the following requirements:
  - (a) Indoor locks for emergency exit doors must remain unlocked from the inside, but may be locked from the outside while the early learning program is open. The door handle must be of the type that can be opened from the inside without the use of a key, tools, or special knowledge, and must automatically unlock when the knob or handle is turned.
  - (b) Exit doors not designated as an emergency exit door may be locked during operating hours. Locking interior doors in early learning program space must be designed to be unlocked from either side. An unlocking device must be readily available.
  - (c) Exit doors must not be partially or entirely blocked.

#### 0170 Fire safety.

- (1) Pursuant to RCW 19.27.031, an outdoor preschool provider must comply with the state building code.

- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must arrange for a fire safety inspection annually. A provider must arrange a fire safety inspection with a local government agency. If a local government agency is not available to conduct a fire safety inspection, a provider must inspect for fire safety using the state fire marshal form. Outdoor preschools operating on public park-land must communicate with the park director regarding fire safety or building inspections of any buildings in use by the outdoor preschool, and ensure that fire inspections occur annually or submit a report to the department.
- (3) To ensure a safe environment for children in care, an outdoor preschool provider must comply with all applicable fire safety requirements. Outdoor preschools must also comply with the following:
  - (a) **Combustible materials.**
    - i. Combustible materials must be properly discarded pursuant to local jurisdiction requirements, removed from the premises, or properly stored in closed metal containers specifically designed to hold such combustible materials;
    - ii. Combustible materials stored in a closed metal container must not be stored in any place that may be accessible to children in care;
    - iii. Combustible materials include, but are not limited to, lint, gasoline, natural gas, diesel, fuel, propane, rags soaked in combustible materials, oils, chemicals, or solvents.
  - (b) **Furnaces and other heating devices.**
    - i. Paper, rubbish, or other combustible materials must be at least three feet from furnaces, fireplaces, campfires, or other heating devices;
    - ii. An appliance or heating device that has a surface capable of burning a child or reaching 110 degrees Fahrenheit must be inaccessible to children in care unless a program activity involves such appliance or device and children are being actively supervised.
  - (c) **Open flame devices, candles, matches and lighters.**
    - i. Except for the use of a gas kitchen range, a camp stove that is in compliance with the requirements described in standard 0195, or a campfire that is in compliance with the requirements described in standard 0351, open flame devices must not be used during operating hours in early learning program space or any other space accessible to children in care;
    - ii. Candles must not be used during operating hours;
    - iii. Matches and lighters must be inaccessible to children.
  - (d) **Portable heaters and generators.** Portable heaters or fuel powered generators must not be used inside early learning program space during operating hours.
    - i. In case of an emergency, a generator may be used but must be placed at least fifteen feet from buildings, windows, doors, ventilation intakes, or other places where exhaust fumes may be vented into the early learning space; and
    - ii. Appliances must be plugged directly into a generator or into a heavy duty outdoor-rated extension cord that is plugged into a generator.
    - iii. When necessary, portable heaters may be used by outdoor preschools for the purposes of keeping children warm in cold weather. If the heating device reaches over one-hundred ten degrees Fahrenheit, children must be actively supervised, and children must remain out of reach of the heater to avoid accidental burns.

- (e) **Fireplaces, woodstoves, or similar wood burning heating devices.** Chimneys, fireplaces, gas burning fireplaces, wood stoves or similar wood-burning devices and fire pits must be inspected annually by a state or locally certified inspector, unless the provider submits to the department a written statement that the chimney, fireplace, wood stove or similar wood-burning device will not be used at any time. An outdoor preschool operating on public land does not have to provide inspection certificates for publicly provided fire pits or wood burning barbeques.
- (f) **Extinguishers.** An outdoor preschool provider operating with an indoor early learning program or engaging in campfire or outdoor cooking activity must have and maintain working fire extinguishers that are marked with a minimum rating of 2A:10 BC.
  - i. Fire extinguishers must be readily available for use in case of an emergency;
  - ii. For outdoor preschools operating in a public park location that does not allow the use of fire extinguishers due to the impact on the water table, alternative fire suppression equipment, such as buckets of water, must be available.

### 0175 Water hazards and swimming pools.

To prevent injury or drowning and ensure the health and safety of children, an outdoor preschool provider must comply with the requirements described in this section.

- (1) The following bodies of water must be inaccessible to children in care by using a physical barrier with a locking mechanism:
  - (a) Swimming pools when not being used as part of the outdoor preschool program, hot tubs, spas and jet tubs;
  - (b) Uncovered wells, septic tanks, wastewater, wastewater tanks, below grade storage tanks, farm manure ponds or other similar hazards.
- (2) Outdoor preschools operating near a natural body of water must only provide a barrier to adjacent bodies of water pursuant to standard 0145, and must provide adequate active supervision pursuant to standard 0350.
- (3) An outdoor preschool provider must comply with the following requirements when using a swimming pool as part of the outdoor preschool program:
  - (a) Comply with the supervision requirements described in standard 0350;
  - (b) Audible alarms must be on all doors, screens, and gates in licensed areas that lead to a swimming pool. The alarm must be sufficient to warn staff when children enter the outdoor area and could access the swimming pool;
  - (c) Swimming pools must be maintained according to manufacturer specifications;
  - (d) Swimming pools must be cleaned and sanitized according to manufacturer instructions and department of health or local health jurisdiction guidelines;
  - (e) A swimming pool must not be used if the main drain cover is missing; and
  - (f) Children in diapers or toilet training must wear swim pants to lower the risk of contaminating the water.
- (4) Filtered wading pools must be inaccessible to children when not in use. Wading pools that do not have a filtering system are not permitted in the outdoor preschool program space.
- (5) If an outdoor preschool provider uses water tables or similar containers, the tables or containers must be emptied and sanitized daily, or more often if necessary.

## FOOD AND NUTRITION

### 0180 Meal and snack schedule.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must serve meals and snacks to children in care as follows:
  - (a) Meals and snacks must be served not less than two hours and not more than three hours apart unless the child is asleep;
  - (b) Children in care for five to nine hours:
    - i. At least one meal and two snacks; or
    - ii. Two meals and one snack.
  - (c) Children in care for more than nine hours:
    - i. Two meals and two snacks; or
    - ii. Three snacks and one meal.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must offer children the opportunity for developmentally appropriate tooth brushing activities after each meal or snack.
  - (a) Tooth brushing activities must be safe, sanitary, and educational.
  - (b) Toothbrushes used in an outdoor preschool program must be stored in a manner that prevents cross contamination.
  - (c) The parent or guardian of a child may opt out of the daily tooth brushing activities by signing a written form.
  - (d) Outdoor preschools may elect to offer tooth brushing education in lieu of a tooth brushing opportunity if there is no way to provide tooth brushing in a safe and sanitary manner.

### 0185 Menus, milk, and food.

To ensure proper nutrition of children in care, an outdoor preschool provider must comply with the child nutrition requirements described in this section.

- (1) Meals, snack foods, and beverages provided to children in care must comply with the requirements contained in the most current edition of the *USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Handbook*, or the *USDA National School Lunch and School Breakfast Program* standards.
  - (a) An outdoor preschool provider must supply dated menus.
  - (b) Food and beverage substitutions to a scheduled menu must be of equal nutritional value.
  - (c) An outdoor preschool provider must only serve water, unflavored milk or one hundred percent fruit or vegetable juice.
  - (d) An outdoor preschool provider must limit the consumption of one hundred percent fruit juice to no more than four to six ounces per day for children between one and six years old, and eight to twelve ounces per day for children seven through twelve years old.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must serve a fruit or vegetable as one of the two required components during at least one snack per day.

### 0186 Food allergies and special dietary needs.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must obtain written instructions (the individual care plan) from the child's health care provider and parent or guardian when caring for a child with a known food allergy or special dietary requirement due to a health condition. Pursuant to standard 0300 the individual care plan must:



- (a) Identify foods that must not be consumed by the child and steps to take in the case of an unintended allergic reaction;
  - (b) Identify foods that can substitute for allergenic foods; and
  - (c) Provide a specific treatment plan for the outdoor preschool provider to follow in response to an allergic reaction. The specific treatment plan must include the:
    - i. Names of all medication to be administered;
    - ii. Directions for how to administer the medication;
    - iii. Directions related to medication dosage amounts; and
    - iv. Description of allergic reactions and symptoms associated with the child's particular allergies.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must arrange with the parents or guardians of a child in care to ensure the outdoor preschool program has the necessary medication, training, and equipment to properly manage a child's food allergies.
- (3) If a child suffers from an allergic reaction, the outdoor preschool provider must immediately:
  - (a) Administer medication pursuant to the instructions in that child's individual care plan;
  - (b) Contact 911 whenever epinephrine or other lifesaving medication has been administered; and
  - (c) Notify the parents or guardians of a child if it is suspected or appears that any of the following occurred, or is occurring:
    - i. The child is having an allergic reaction; or
    - ii. The child consumed or came in contact with a food identified by the parents or guardians that must not be consumed by the child, even if the child is not having or did not have an allergic reaction.
- (4) Outdoor preschool providers must review each child's individual care plan information for food allergies prior to serving food to children.

#### 0190 Parent or guardian provided food and written food plans.

- (1) A written food plan must be developed by the provider and a child's parent or guardian, signed by all parties, and followed when accommodating a child's:
  - (a) Special feeding needs;
  - (b) Special diets;
  - (c) Religious or cultural preferences;
  - (d) Family preference; or
  - (e) Other needs.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider may allow or require parents or guardians to bring food for their child.
- (3) If a parent or guardian provides meals for their child, an outdoor preschool provider must:
  - (a) Notify the parent or guardian in writing of the USDA CACFP requirements for each meal; and
  - (b) If necessary, supplement a child's meal that does not comply with USDA CACFP requirements.
- (4) On special occasions, such as birthdays, an outdoor preschool provider may allow parents or guardians to bring in snacks that may not satisfy the nutritional requirements for all children. The snacks provided must be limited to:
  - (a) Store purchased fruits and vegetables (uncut);
  - (b) Foods prepackaged in the original manufacturer containers; or

- (c) Snacks prepared, cooked, or baked at home by parents or guardians of a child in care. Prior to serving, an outdoor preschool provider must receive written permission from each child's parent or guardian stating their child may consume food prepared, cooked, or baked by another child's parent or guardian.

#### 0195 Food service, equipment, and practices.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider preparing or serving food must comply with the current department of health *Washington State Food and Beverage Workers' Manual* and supervise services that prepare or deliver food to the outdoor preschool program.
- (2) Unless the food is provided pursuant to standard 0196(3), snacks and meals must be prepared and served by an outdoor preschool provider that possesses a valid and current food worker card pursuant to standard 0106 (11).
- (3) An outdoor preschool provider must:
  - (a) Supply durable and developmentally appropriate individual eating and drinking equipment, or developmentally appropriate single use disposable items.
  - (b) Clean and sanitize eating and drinking equipment after each use. Water cups or bottles must be cleaned and sanitized daily if designated for a single child.
  - (c) Ensure plastic eating and drinking equipment does not contain BPA (a chemical used in hard plastic bottles and as a protective lining in food and beverage cans) or have cracks or chips.
  - (d) Use gloves, utensils, or tongs to serve food.
  - (e) If appropriate, serve meals or snacks on plates, dishware, containers, trays, or napkins or paper towels. Food should not be served directly on the eating surface.
  - (f) Be respectful of each child's cultural food practices.
- (4) An outdoor preschool provider must:
  - (a) Serve each child individually or serve family style dining, allowing each child the opportunity to practice skills such as passing shared serving bowls and serving themselves; and
  - (b) Sit with children during meals.
- (5) Outdoor preschools may use campstoves that comply with applicable regulations to heat or cook food for children. Children that are in the cooking area (within 3 feet of the campstove) must be actively supervised. Supervision for any child engaged in a cooking activity must be based on a one-to-one (1:1) staff-to-child ratio; and the staff member must remain within arms' reach of the child at all times.

#### 0196 Food sources.

- (1) Food prepared and served from an outdoor preschool program must not be tampered with or spoiled.
- (2) Food prepared and served from an outdoor preschool program must be obtained from an approved source licensed and inspected by the local health jurisdiction, the Washington state department of agriculture (WSDA), or the USDA. Food items not approved to be served to children in care include:
  - (a) Meat, fish, poultry, eggs, or milk that has not been inspected by the USDA or WSDA;
  - (b) Eggs collected from chickens that are kept as part of a nature-based outdoor preschool, but do not comply with the requirements contained in subsection (5) of this section;
  - (c) Home canned food;

- (d) Game meat or other meat that has not been inspected by the WSDA or USDA;
  - (e) Leftover food that was previously served from outside of the outdoor preschool program; or
  - (f) Food from roadside stands selling food without a permit.
- (3) Pursuant to standard 0195(2) food not prepared on-site by an outdoor preschool provider must be provided by:
  - (a) A licensed food service establishment, kitchen, or catering business that is in compliance with department of health food service requirements (chapter 246-215 WAC) and is regularly inspected by a local health jurisdiction;
  - (b) A parent or guardian for his or her own children; or
  - (c) A manufacturer of prepackaged food.
- (4) Fruits and vegetables (produce) grown on-site in a garden as part of an outdoor preschool program may be served to children as part of a meal or snack. Prior to preparing and serving:
  - (a) The produce must be thoroughly washed and scrubbed in cold running water to remove soil and other contaminants;
  - (b) Damaged or bruised areas on the produce must be removed; and
  - (c) Produce that shows signs of rotting must be discarded.
- (5) Eggs that have been laid on-site in a coop as part of a nature-based outdoor preschool program, such as a farm-based program, may only be served to children in care if:
  - (a) The eggs have been laid in a coop that is inaccessible to the public.
  - (b) The eggs are gathered twice a day.
  - (c) The coop and the eggs must be kept under eighty degrees Fahrenheit. Coops must have their temperatures monitored daily, and when the coop temperature or egg temperature is above eighty degrees Fahrenheit, the eggs cannot be served to children.
  - (d) The eggs must be washed according to the facilities and handling guidelines of the WSDA Shell Egg Producer Guidelines for Off-Farm Sales.
  - (e) Written permission from the child's parent must be obtained before the child may consume the eggs or participate in the collection activities.

#### 0197 Safe food practices.

- (1) Pursuant to standard 0200, outdoor preschool providers must wash their hands.
- (2) Outdoor preschool providers must store, prepare, cook, hold food, and wash dishes, pursuant to the requirements described in standards 0195 through 0198.
- (3) For all foods offered by the provider or given to an enrolled child by a parent or guardian, the provider must:
  - (a) Provide appropriate refrigeration to preserve foods from spoiling. Foods that may be subject to spoiling include, but are not limited to, meats, cooked potatoes, cooked legumes, cooked rice, sprouts, cut melons, cut cantaloupes, milk, and cheese; and
  - (b) Refrigerate foods requiring refrigeration at forty-one degrees Fahrenheit or less, and freeze foods required to be frozen at ten degrees Fahrenheit or less.
- (4) Food must be stored as follows:
  - (a) In original containers or in clean, labeled, dated, and airtight food grade containers, if appropriate;
  - (b) Food not required to be refrigerated or frozen must not be stored directly on the floor;
  - (c) In a manner that prevents contamination;

- (d) Food and food service items (such as utensils, napkins, and dishes) must not be stored in an area with toxic materials (such as cleaning supplies, paint, or pesticides);
  - (e) Food that is past the manufacturer's expiration or "best served by" date must not be served to enrolled children;
  - (f) Raw meat must be stored in the refrigerator or freezer below cooked or ready to eat foods; and
  - (g) To keep food below a temperature of forty-one degrees Fahrenheit, outdoor preschools may store food in a cooler using ice or icepacks.
- (5) For food requiring temperature control, an outdoor preschool program must maintain a food temperature log by using a calibrated and working metal stem-type or digital food thermometer.
- (6) Prior to storing leftover food in a refrigerator or freezer, an outdoor preschool provider must label the food with the date the leftover food was opened or cooked.
- (7) An outdoor preschool provider may serve leftover food that originated from the outdoor preschool program if the leftover food was not previously served and complies with the following:
- (a) Refrigerated leftover food must be stored and then served again within forty-eight hours of originally being prepared; or
  - (b) Frozen leftover food must be promptly served after thawing and being cooked.
- (8) Frozen food must be thawed by one of the following methods:
- (a) In a refrigerator;
  - (b) Under cool running water inside a pan placed in a sink with the drain plug removed; or
  - (c) In a microwave if the food is to be cooked as part of the continuous cooking process.

#### 0198 Food preparation areas.

- (1) Pursuant to standard 0241(1) and (2), an outdoor preschool provider or staff person must clean and sanitize food preparation areas and eating surfaces before and after each use.
- (2) Outdoor preschool providers must comply with all licensing requirements that pertain to indoor early learning program food preparation areas. If storing, preparing and serving food outdoors without an outdoor kitchen area, the outdoor preschool provider must:
  - (a) Use a cooler with ice or ice packs as needed to store food according to the current Washington State Food and Beverage Workers' Manual prepared by DOH; and
  - (b) Use temporary food preparation surfaces, such as a cutting board on a clean tarp, and these surfaces must be:
    - i. Maintained in good repair including, but not limited to, being properly sealed without chips, cracks, or tears; and
    - ii. Moisture resistant.
- (3) An outdoor kitchen area may be used to prepare and serve food. The outdoor kitchen area must:
  - (a) Be maintained in good repair including, but not limited to, ensuring that the surfaces are moisture resistant, and are properly sealed without chips, cracks, or tears.
  - (b) Have at least eight feet between the food preparation area and any diaper changing tables or counters and sinks used for diaper changing;



- (c) Be clean and have a sanitized sink immediately before using it to prepare food to be served to children in care;
  - (d) Use a colander or other method to prevent food and kitchen utensils from touching the sink basin; and
  - (e) Include clean dishes, pans, baby bottles, and kitchen utensils.
- (4) Outdoor preschool providers that prepare or serve food must have a method to clean and sanitize dishes, pans, kitchen utensils, and equipment as follows:
  - (a) Dishes, pans, kitchen utensils, and equipment may be washed and rinsed by hand, and sanitized by allowing to air dry;
  - (b) Dishes, pans, kitchen utensils, and equipment may be washed and rinsed in a two-compartment sink;
  - (c) Dishes, pans, kitchen utensils, and equipment may be washed and rinsed using the three-compartment sink method (sink one is used to wash, sink two is used to rinse, sink three contains a sanitizer, and the dishes are allowed to air dry);
  - (d) Dishes, pans, kitchen utensils, and equipment may be washed and rinsed using an automatic dishwasher that sanitizes with heat or chemicals.
- (5) If an outdoor preschool program has a practice where staff are storing or washing food at their private residence, the outdoor preschool must have a policy to ensure staff are aware of the requirements of this section. This practice must be included in the parent handbook.

## HEALTH PRACTICES

### 0200 Handwashing and hand sanitizer.

- (1) Outdoor preschool providers must comply with the following handwashing procedures or those defined by the United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and children should strongly be encouraged to:
  - (a) Wet hands with warm water;
  - (b) Apply soap to the hands;
  - (c) Rub hands together to wash for at least twenty seconds;
  - (d) Thoroughly rinse hands with water;
  - (e) Dry hands with a paper towel, single-use cloth towel, or air hand dryer. Outdoor preschools may use cotton roll towels, or otherwise ensure that children do not use the same part of re-usable cloth towels;
  - (f) Turn water faucet off using a paper towel or single-use cloth towel unless it turns off automatically; and
  - (g) Properly discard paper single-use cloth towels after each use.
  - (h) Outdoor preschools with a permanently located outdoor classroom must provide children with an opportunity to wash hands and rinse using running water after toileting and before eating, and warm water is encouraged. Hand sanitizer may be used only after soil and dirt have been cleaned from the hands.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must wash and sanitize cloth towels after a single use. Soiled and used towels must be inaccessible to children.
- (3) To prevent children from being burned, air hand dryers must have a heat guard (barrier that prevents user from touching heating element) and be equipped to turn off automatically.

- (4) Outdoor preschool providers must wash their hands, following the handwashing procedures described in subsection (1) of this section, under the following circumstances:
- (a) When arriving at work;
  - (b) After toileting a child;
  - (c) Before and after diapering a child (use a wet wipe in place of handwashing during the middle of diapering if needed);
  - (d) After personal toileting;
  - (e) After attending to an ill child;
  - (f) Before and after preparing, serving, or eating food;
  - (g) Before preparing bottles;
  - (h) After handling raw or undercooked meat, poultry, or fish;
  - (i) Before and after giving medication or applying topical ointment;
  - (j) After handling or feeding animals, handling an animal's toys or equipment, or cleaning up after animals;
  - (k) After handling bodily fluids;
  - (l) After using tobacco or vapor products;
  - (m) After being outdoors;
  - (n) After gardening activities;
  - (o) After handling garbage and garbage receptacles; and
  - (p) As needed or required by the circumstances.
- (5) Following the handwashing procedures described in subsection (1) of this section, Outdoor preschool providers must direct, assist, teach, and coach, children to wash their hands, under the following circumstances:
- (a) When arriving at the outdoor preschool program
  - (b) After using the toilet;
  - (c) After diapering;
  - (d) After outdoor play and upon entering an indoor early learning space;
  - (e) After gardening activities;
  - (f) After playing with animals;
  - (g) After touching body fluids such as blood or after nose blowing or sneezing;
  - (h) Before and after eating or participating in food activities including table setting; and
  - (i) As needed or required by the circumstances.
- (6) Hand sanitizers or hand wipes with alcohol may be used for adults and children over twenty-four months of age under the following conditions:
- (a) When proper handwashing facilities are not available; and
  - (b) Hands are not visibly soiled or dirty.
- (7) Children must be actively supervised when using hand sanitizers to avoid ingestion or contact with eyes, nose, or mouth.
- (a) Hand sanitizer must not be used in place of proper handwashing.
  - (b) An alcohol-based hand sanitizer must contain sixty to ninety percent alcohol to be effective.

#### 0205 Child, staff, and household member illness.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must observe all children for signs of illness when they arrive at the outdoor preschool program and throughout the day. As soon as possible parents or guardians of a child should be notified if the child develops signs or symptoms

of illness. When appropriate, outdoor preschools must also check for the presence of ticks.

- (2) If an outdoor preschool provider becomes ill, a director, assistant director, or program supervisor must determine whether that person should be required to leave the licensed outdoor preschool space.
- (3) If a child becomes ill, an outdoor preschool provider (or school nurse, if applicable) must determine whether the child should be sent home or separated from others. A provider must supervise the child to reasonably prevent contact between the ill child and healthy children.
- (4) An ill child must be sent home or reasonably separated from other children if:
  - (a) The illness or condition prevents the child from participating in normal activities;
  - (b) The illness or condition requires more care and attention than the outdoor preschool provider can give;
  - (c) The required amount of care for the ill child compromises or places at risk the health and safety of other children in care; or
  - (d) There is a risk that the child's illness or condition will spread to other children or individuals.
- (5) Unless covered by an individual care plan or protected by the ADA, an ill child, staff member, or other individual must be sent home or isolated from children in care if he or she has:
  - (a) A fever of one-hundred and one degrees Fahrenheit for children over two months (or 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit for an infant younger than two months), and there is a behavior change or other signs and symptoms of illness (including sore throat, earache, headache, rash, vomiting, diarrhea);
  - (b) Vomiting two or more times in the previous twenty-four hours;
  - (c) Diarrhea where stool frequency exceeds two stools above normal per twenty-four hours for that child or whose stool contains more than a drop of blood or mucus;
  - (d) A rash not associated with heat, diapering, or an allergic reaction;
  - (e) Open sores or wounds discharging bodily fluids that cannot be adequately covered with a waterproof dressing or mouth sores with drooling;
  - (f) Lice, ringworm, or scabies. Individuals with head lice, ringworm, or scabies must be excluded from the childcare premises beginning from the end of the day the head lice or scabies was discovered. The provider may allow an individual with head lice or scabies to return to the premises after receiving the first treatment; or
  - (g) Appears severely ill, which may include lethargy, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, or a significant change in behavior or activity level indicative of illness.
- (6) An outdoor preschool provider must provide written notice to the department, the local health jurisdiction, and the parents or guardians of the enrolled children at the first opportunity, but in no case longer than twenty-four hours, after learning that an enrolled child, staff member, volunteer or household member has been diagnosed by a health care professional with a contagious disease described in WAC 246-110-010(3).
- (7) An outdoor preschool provider must not take ear or rectal temperatures to determine a child's body temperature.

- (a) Providers must use developmentally appropriate methods when taking infant or toddler temperatures (for example, digital forehead scan thermometers or underarm auxiliary methods);
  - (b) Oral temperatures may be taken for preschool through school-age children if single-use covers are used to prevent cross contamination; and
  - (c) Glass thermometers containing mercury must not be used.
- (8) An outdoor preschool provider may readmit a child, staff member, volunteer or household member into the outdoor preschool program area with written permission of a health care provider or health jurisdiction stating the individual may safely return after being diagnosed with a contagious disease listed in WAC 246-110-010(3).

## 0210 Immunizations and exempt children.

- (1) Before attending an outdoor preschool program, a child must be vaccinated against or show proof of acquired immunity for the vaccine-preventable disease, pursuant to chapter 246-105 WAC. An outdoor preschool provider may accept children without proof of vaccinations or immunity as otherwise indicated in this section.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must receive for each enrolled child:
  - (a) Pursuant to WAC 246-105-050, a current and complete department of health certificate of immunization status (CIS) or certificate of exemption (COE) or other department of health approved form, ; or
  - (b) A current immunization record from the Washington state immunization information system (WA IIS).
- (3) To accept a child who is not current with their immunizations, an outdoor preschool provider must give written notice to that child's parent or guardian stating the child may be accepted if the immunizations are completed as soon as possible and:
  - (a) Prior to enrollment the parent or guardian provides written proof the child is scheduled to be immunized; or
  - (b) The parent or guardian provides a signed and dated statement detailing when the child's immunizations will be brought up to date.
- (4) An outdoor preschool provider must maintain and update each child's records relating to immunizations or exemptions, or plans to bring immunizations current. These records must easily accessible for review by department licensors, health specialists, and health consultants.
- (5) An outdoor preschool provider may accept homeless or foster children into care without the records listed in this section if the child's family, case worker, or health care provider offers written proof that he or she is in the process of obtaining the child's immunization records.
- (6) An outdoor preschool provider may exclude a child from care according to the criteria listed in WAC 246-105-080.
- (7) If an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease occurs within an outdoor preschool program, an outdoor preschool provider must notify the parents or guardians of children exempt from immunization for that disease and children without vaccination documents. A provider may exclude the child from the child care premises for the duration of the outbreak of that vaccine-preventable disease.
- (8) An outdoor preschool provider may have a written policy stating children exempted from immunization by their parent or guardian will not be accepted into care unless that exemption is due to an illness protected by the ADA or Washington's law against discrimination or by a completed and signed certificate of exemption (COE).



## 0215 Medication.

- (1) **Managing medication.** Pursuant to standard 0500, a medication management policy must include, but is not limited to, safe medication storage, reasonable accommodations for giving medication, mandatory medication documentation and forms.
- (2) **Medication training.** An outdoor preschool provider must not give medication to a child if the provider has not successfully completed:
  - (a) An orientation about the outdoor preschool program's medication policies and procedures;
  - (b) Pursuant to standard 0106(8), the department's standardized training or equivalent training in medication administration that includes a competency assessment ; and
  - (c) A training from a child's parents or guardian (or an appointed designee) for special medical procedures that are part of a child's individual care plan. This training must be documented and signed by the provider and the child's parent or guardian (or designee).
- (3) **Medication administration.** An outdoor preschool provider must not give medication to any child without the written and signed consent from that child's parent or guardian, must administer medication pursuant to directions on the medication label, and use appropriate cleaned and sanitized medication measuring devices.
  - (a) An outdoor preschool provider must administer medication to children in care as follows:
    - i. **Prescription medication.** Prescription medication must only be given to the child named on the prescription. Prescription medication must be prescribed by a health care professional with prescriptive authority for a specific child. Prescription medication must be accompanied with a medication authorization form that has the medical need and the possible side effects of the medication. Prescription medication must be labeled with:
      - (A) The child's first and last name;
      - (B) The date the prescription was filled;
      - (C) The name and contact information of the prescribing health professional;
      - (D) The expiration date, dosage amount, and length of time to give the medication; and
      - (E) Instructions for administration and storage.
    - ii. **Nonprescription oral medication.** Nonprescription (over-the-counter) oral medication brought to the outdoor preschool program by a parent or guardian must be in the original packaging.
      - (A) Nonprescription (over-the-counter) medication needs to be labeled with the child's first and last name and accompanied with a medication authorization form that has the expiration date, medical need, dosage amount, age, and length of time to give the medication. Outdoor preschool providers must follow the instructions on the label or the parent must provide a medical professional's note; and
      - (B) Nonprescription medication must only be given to the child named on the label provided by the parent or guardian.
    - iii. **Other nonprescription medication:** An outdoor preschool provider must receive written authorization from a child's parent or guardian and health

care provider with prescriptive authority prior to administering if the item does not include age, expiration date, dosage amount, and length of time to give the medication. Medications under this subsection include, but is not limited to the following:

- (A) Vitamins;
- (B) Herbal supplements;
- (C) Fluoride supplements;
- (D) Homeopathic or naturopathic medication; and
- (E) Teething gel or tablets (amber bead necklaces are prohibited).

- iv. **Nonmedical items.** A parent or guardian must annually authorize an outdoor preschool provider to administer the following nonmedical items:
  - (A) Diaper ointments (used as needed and according to manufacturer's instructions);
  - (B) Sunscreen;
  - (C) Lip balm or lotion;
  - (D) Hand sanitizers or hand wipes with alcohol, which may be used only for children over twenty-four months old; and
  - (E) Fluoride toothpaste for children two years old or older.
- v. An outdoor preschool provider may allow children to take his or her own medication with parent or guardian authorization. The outdoor preschool staff member must observe and document that the child took the medication.
- vi. An outdoor preschool provider must not give or permit another to give any medication to a child for the purpose of sedating the child unless the medication has been prescribed for a specific child for that particular purpose by a qualified health care professional.

- (b) **Medication documentation** (excluding nonmedical items). An outdoor preschool provider must keep a current written medication log that includes:
  - i. A child's first and last name;
  - ii. The name of the medication that was given to the child;
  - iii. The dose amount that was given to the child;
  - iv. Notes about any side effects exhibited by the child;
  - v. The date and time of each medication given or reasons that a particular medication was not given; and
  - vi. The name and signature of the person that gave the medication.

- (c) Medication must be stored and maintained as directed on the packaging or prescription label, including applicable refrigeration requirements. Outdoor preschools may use approved coolers and re-usable water-activated cooling packs for medication storage if the medication's manufacturer directions require the medication be stored at a temperature below the indoor or outdoor temperature. An outdoor preschool provider must comply with the following additional medication storage requirements:
  - i. Medication must be inaccessible to children;
  - ii. Controlled substances must be locked in a container or cabinet which is inaccessible to children;
  - iii. Medication must be kept away from food in a separate, sealed container; and

- iv. External medication (designed to be applied to the outside of the body) must be stored to provide separation from internal medication (designed to be swallowed or injected) to prevent cross contamination.
- (d) An outdoor preschool provider must return a child's unused medication to that child's parent or guardian. If this is not possible, a provider must follow the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommendations for medication disposal.
- (e) An outdoor preschool provider must not accept or give to a child homemade medication, such as diaper cream or sunscreen.

## 0220 Bathroom space and toilet training.

- (1) If applicable, outdoor preschool providers must meet all licensing requirements for an indoor early learning bathroom space.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must provide at least one of the following bathroom options, and may use a combination of toileting options to ensure children and staff are able to meet their toileting needs:
  - (a) An indoor bathroom that meets the licensing requirements for an indoor early learning bathroom space.
  - (b) A portable chemical toilet designated for use by the outdoor preschool program. The portable chemical toilet must be emptied regularly and as needed. Pursuant to standard 0241, the portable chemical toilet surfaces must be cleaned daily and as needed. The waste container for the portable chemical toilet must:
    - i. Be fabricated from impervious materials (for example, plastic, steel, fiberglass or other equivalent material).
    - ii. Be water tight and capable of containing the chemical waste in a sanitary manner.
    - iii. Be sufficient in size for the number of persons that will be using the toilet and consistent with the manufacturer's recommended use requirements. At a minimum the portable chemical toilet must be of sufficient size that the container will normally be at half of its volume capacity immediately before each regularly scheduled emptying of the waste.
  - (c) The use of toileting facilities in a public park or nature center if the bathrooms are checked for cleanliness and safety prior to the children's use and the toilet seats, sinks, or other surfaces that children touch are cleaned and disinfected daily.
  - (d) A portable toilet, with individual liners that allow for sanitary disposal after each use, and with surfaces cleaned daily, and as needed pursuant to standard 0241.
  - (e) A water conserving toilet, such as a composting or pit toilet, and greywater system that meets the requirements for health and sanitation as described in the Washington State Department of Health Water Conserving On-Site Wastewater Treatment Systems- Recommended Standards and Guidance (<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/Pubs/337-016.pdf>).
  - (f) If no other toileting options are available, backcountry toileting options that comply with the rules of the landowner, and leave-no-trace standards described at <https://Int.org/learn/principle-3>. Unless approved by the department, children must not be allowed to play or eat within 200 feet of areas that have been used or are designated as backcountry toileting spaces. Outdoor preschool providers must use gloves to assist children and to ensure the sanitary disposal of toilet paper. Both children and adults must wash their hands pursuant to the requirements contained in standard 0200 (Handwashing and hand sanitizer).

(g) For the toileting options described in subsections (2)(b) through (2)(f) of this section:

- i. To ensure successful toileting and handwashing practices, outdoor preschool providers must ensure children have independent access to sufficient toilet paper, handwashing equipment, and staff support.
  - ii. Outdoor preschools must include an outdoor preschool toileting policy in the parent handbook and pursuant to standard 0450 (Parent or guardian handbook and related policies), a risk waiver must be included in the parent enrollment packet.
  - iii. Outdoor preschool staff must be trained in the proper use of alternative toileting options, and pursuant to standard 0110 (Program based staff policies and training), the program's policies and procedures for supporting children.
  - iv. Staff must be supported to meet their own toileting needs.
- (3) An outdoor preschool provider must discuss toilet training procedures with that child's parent or guardian when a child is ready for training. A provider must facilitate the toilet training process by encouraging the child with:
- (a) Positive reinforcement (which may not include food items);
  - (b) Culturally sensitive methods;
  - (c) Developmentally appropriate methods; and
  - (d) A toilet training routine developed in agreement with the parent or guardian.
- (4) An outdoor preschool provider may use a modified toilet seat if it is cleaned and disinfected using a safe disinfectant at least daily or more often if soiled.
- (5) Toilet training equipment must be cleaned in a sink not used for food preparation, handwashing, or clean up.
- (6) If a child is developmentally ready, and an outdoor preschool provider uses a stand-up diapering procedure, it must be done in the bathroom or a diaper changing area.

## 0221 Diaper changing areas and disposal.

- (1) If applicable, outdoor preschool providers must meet all licensing requirements for an indoor early learning diaper changing area.
- (a) A diaper changing area must:
    - i. Be separate from areas where food is stored, prepared, or served;
    - ii. Be separate from where children play or eat;
    - iii. Pursuant to standard 0200 have an approved handwashing method readily available;
    - iv. Have a sturdy surface or mat that:
      - (A) Is not torn or repaired with tape;
      - (B) Is washable;
      - (C) Has a moisture resistant surface that is cleanable; and
      - (D) Is large enough to prevent the area underneath the diaper changing area from being contaminated with bodily fluids.
    - v. Be uncluttered and not used for storage of any items not used in diapering a child.
  - (b) An outdoor preschool provider must not leave a child unattended on the diaper changing surface or mat during the diaper changing process;
  - (c) An outdoor preschool provider must not use safety belts on diaper changing tables because they are neither cleanable nor safe; and



- (d) An outdoor preschool provider must have and follow each step described in a diaper changing procedure to ensure diaper changing and disposal practices prevent cross-contamination.
- (2) If an outdoor preschool provider uses reusable or cloth diapers, the diapers must:
  - (a) Not be rinsed;
  - (b) Be placed in a securely sealed moisture impervious bag;
  - (c) Be stored in a separate disposal container; and
  - (d) Be delivered to a commercial laundry service or given to the child's parent or guardian at least daily.
- (3) An outdoor preschool provider must provide a container designated for disposing of soiled diapers and diapering supplies only. The diaper disposal container must be:
  - (a) Inaccessible to children
  - (b) Hands-free and covered with a lid to prevent cross contamination, or cross-contamination must be preventable by diaper changing procedures;
  - (c) Lined with a disposable plastic trash bag; and
  - (d) Within arm's length of the diaper changing area.

#### 0225 Pets and animals.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider may have pets or other animals on the outdoor preschool program premises. Outdoor preschool providers must comply with all applicable licensing requirements that apply to pets or animals in the indoor childcare or early learning environment.
- (2) The outdoor preschool provider must have an encountering wildlife policy. If an outdoor preschool provider keeps pets or animals on the outdoor preschool program premises:
  - (a) The provider must have and follow a pet and animal policy;
  - (b) The provider must provide written notice of the presence of the pets or animals to the children's parents or guardians; and
  - (c) The outdoor preschool must have an encountering pets policy.
- (3) Pets or other animals provided by the outdoor preschool program that have contact with children must:
  - (a) Have all required vaccinations, pursuant to local and county regulations;
  - (b) Show no signs of illness, disease, worms, or parasites. If these symptoms appear, the pet or animal must be removed from the licensed space until appropriately treated for the condition; and
  - (c) Be nonaggressive.
- (4) An outdoor preschool provider must:
  - (a) Require that chickens, ducks, turkeys, doves, pigeons, or other birds that are provided by the outdoor preschool program:
    - (i) Are caged, cooped, or penned when they are not a part of a supervised outdoor preschool program activity so that they are inaccessible to children; and
    - (ii) Are kept at a distance that prevents children from having direct access to the animal's enclosures or waste when they are not a part of a supervised outdoor preschool program activity.
  - (b) Prevent debris from spilling out of a container or cage used for pets and animals;
  - (c) Not allow pets and animals in the kitchen during food preparation and ensure pets and animals do not come into contact with food, food preparation, or serving areas while food is served;

- (d) Not use a sink that is used for cleaning food or utensils to clean pet supplies; and
  - (e) Store pet and animal medication separate from human medication.
- (5) An outdoor preschool provider must require:
- (a) Animals and pets to go to the bathroom outdoors if the animals do not have a designated indoor litter area. The designated outdoor area must be inaccessible to children in care, unless part of a sustainable farming practice approved by the department for an outdoor preschool;
  - (b) Pet containers and cages to be cleaned and disinfected at least weekly, or more often if needed;
  - (c) Litter boxes to be kept inaccessible to children and cleaned daily;
  - (d) Animal waste and litter be disposed of as soon as possible and the area disinfected. Outdoor preschools encountering wildlife and wildlife waste in natural outdoor spaces are not required to handle animal wastes. Outdoor preschools must prevent children from handling animal waste, and must ensure children wash their hands and change clothing if they come into contact with animal waste;
  - (e) Animal waste to be inaccessible to children, unless part of a sustainable farming practice approved by the department utilized by an outdoor preschool;
  - (f) Animal waste to be disposed of in a manner that prevents children from coming into contact with the waste material;
  - (g) Animal waste, including fish tank water, be disposed of in unlicensed space or toilets or custodial sinks. Toilets and custodial sink areas must be washed, rinsed, and disinfected after disposal; and
  - (h) Indoor and outdoor play space to be cleaned and disinfected where animal or bird waste or vomit is present, not including natural outdoor spaces utilized by outdoor preschools. This must be done as soon as possible or prior to access by children. Staff must prevent children from handling animal waste or vomit, and ensure children wash their hands and change clothing if they come into contact with animal waste.

#### 0230 First-aid supplies.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must keep a complete first-aid kit where children are present, such as in the licensed space, on any off-site trip, and in a vehicle used to transport children in care. A first-aid kit must:
  - (a) Be stored in a location that is easily accessible to staff;
  - (b) Be inaccessible to children;
  - (c) Be separate from food or chemicals;
  - (d) Be kept clean and sanitary;
  - (e) Be stored in a manner that prevents contamination; and
  - (f) Have sufficient supplies for the number of enrolled children and staff consistent with the outdoor preschool program's licensed capacity, or sufficient supplies for each room in the licensed space.
- (2) A first-aid kit must include:
  - (a) Disposable nonporous protective nonlatex gloves;
  - (b) Adhesive bandages of various sizes;
  - (c) Small scissors;
  - (d) Tweezers;
  - (e) An elastic wrapping bandage;

- (f) Sterile gauze pads;
- (g) Ice packs;
- (h) A disposable or mercury free thermometer that uses disposable sleeves, or is cleaned and sanitized after each use;
- (i) A sling, or a large triangular bandage;
- (j) Adhesive tape;
- (k) A CPR barrier with a one-way valve or both, and an adult and pediatric CPR mask with a one-way valve;
- (l) Sterile, non-adhesive bandages of various sizes for outdoor preschool programs that engage in campfire activities;
- (m) A fire suppression blanket for outdoor preschool programs that engage in campfire activities;
- (n) Hand-warmers and a method to prevent direct skin contact for hand-warmers that reach temperatures above one-hundred twenty degrees Fahrenheit;
- (o) Emergency thermal blanket;
- (p) A current first-aid manual; and
- (q) Hand sanitizer (for adult use only, unless otherwise approved for children's use).

#### 0235 Safe sources of drinking water.

- (1) Outdoor preschools without access to hot or cold running water must provide sufficient potable water for drinking and handwashing.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must use a Washington state certified water laboratory accredited by the Department of Ecology to test the program water supply for lead and copper.
  - (a) All fixtures used to obtain water for preparing food or infant formula, drinking, or cooking must be tested prior to licensing approval and at least once every six years.
  - (b) Testing must be done pursuant to current environmental protection agency standards.
  - (c) A copy of the water testing results must be kept on the licensed premises or in the program's administrative office.
  - (d) Outdoor preschools operating entirely on public land may use public records of water testing for their location instead of using a Department of Ecology accredited laboratory to conduct the testing described in subsection (2) of this section.
- (3) If the test results are at or above the current EPA lead action level, an outdoor preschool provider must do the following within 24 hours:
  - (a) Consult with department of health for technical assistance;
  - (b) Close the outdoor preschool program to prevent children from using or consuming water, or supply bottled or packaged water to meet the requirements of these standards;
  - (c) Notify all parents and guardians of enrolled children of the test results;
  - (d) Notify the department of the water test results and steps taken to protect enrolled children; and
  - (e) Notify the department once lead and copper levels are below the current EPA action level.

- (4) If an outdoor preschool program space receives water from a private well, the well must comply with chapter 173-160 WAC (minimum standards for construction and maintenance of wells).
  - (a) Well water must be tested within six months of the date this section becomes effective and at least once every twelve months thereafter for E. coli bacteria and nitrates by a Washington state certified laboratory accredited by the department of ecology to analyze drinking water. To achieve desirable results the test must indicate:
    - i. No presence of E. coli bacteria; and
    - ii. The presence of less than ten parts per million (ppm) for nitrates. If test results for nitrates are greater than five but less than ten ppm, the water must be retested within six months.
  - (b) If well water tests positive for E. coli bacteria, or greater than ten ppm for nitrates, the provider must:
    - i. Stop using the well water in the child care premises within twenty-four hours;
    - ii. Inform the local health jurisdiction, department of health and the department of the positive test results; and
    - iii. If directed to do so by the department, discontinue child care operations until repairs are made to the water system and water tests indicate desirable results pursuant to subsection (4)(a) of this section.
  - (c) If the department determines that child care operations may continue while an unsafe water system is being repaired or while the provider installs treatment, the provider must:
    - i. Provide an alternate source of water, approved by the department; and
    - ii. Re-test until water tests indicate desirable results pursuant to subsection (4)(a) of this section.
- (5) An outdoor preschool provider must notify the department within two to four hours of when the water connection to an outdoor preschool program space is interrupted for more than one hour, or the water source becomes contaminated.
  - (a) The department may require the outdoor preschool provider to temporarily close until the water connection is restored or the water source is no longer contaminated; or
  - (b) The provider must obtain an alternative source of potable water such as bottled or packaged water. The amount of the alternative source of potable water must be sufficient to ensure compliance with the requirements of these standards for safe drinking water, handwashing, sanitizing, dishwashing, and cooking.

#### 0236 Safe drinking water.

- (1) An outdoor preschool program's drinking water must:
  - (a) Be offered multiple times throughout the day and be readily available to children at all times;
  - (b) Be served in a manner that prevents contamination;
  - (c) Not be obtained from a handwashing sink used with toileting or diapering; and
  - (d) Be served fresh daily or more often as needed.
- (2) Outdoor preschools must only provide or allow the use of drinking fountains that are:
  - (a) Not attached to handwashing sinks or disabled;
  - (b) Not located in bathrooms;



- (c) Not a "bubble type" fountain (the water flow must form an arch); and
  - (d) Cleaned and sanitized daily, or more often as needed;
- (3) Outdoor preschools may ask that families provide drinking water in water bottles for their children, and these must be labeled with the children's first and last names. Outdoor preschools must provide water to children in accordance with this section whenever necessary, such as when a water bottle is forgotten or empty.

## CLEANING AND SANITATION

### 0240 Clean and healthy environment.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must follow all applicable licensing requirements regarding the cleanliness of the licensed indoor space and fenced playground, unless otherwise stated in these standards.
- (2) Outdoor preschools operating with a permanently located outdoor classroom must protect children from toxic or infectious agents, such as animal and human waste or needles and if possible sanitize the contaminated area prior to children's use.
  - (a) If a bleach solution is used for sanitizing or disinfecting, an outdoor preschool provider must use one that is fragrance-free and follow the department of health's current Guidelines for Mixing Bleach Solutions for Child Care and Similar Environments.
  - (b) If an outdoor preschool provider uses a product other than bleach, (including wipes) to sanitize or disinfect, the product must be:
    - i. Approved by the department prior to use;
    - ii. Used by trained staff only;
    - iii. Registered with the EPA and have Safety Data Sheets (SDS) available;
    - iv. Used in accordance with the manufacturer's label, which must include:
      - (A) Directions for use;
      - (B) A description of the safety precautions and procedures, and if applicable, a description of the equipment that must be used for mixing the substitute product concentration;
      - (C) A description of the safety precautions and procedures if the substitute product contacts skin or is inhaled; and
      - (D) A description of the procedures and safety precautions for rinsing cleaned areas and cleaning equipment.
    - v. Labeled as safe to use on food surfaces if the product will be used to sanitize:
      - (A) Food contact surfaces; or
      - (B) Items such as eating utensils or toys used by the child or put into the child's mouth; and
    - vi. Fragrance-free.
  - (c) If it is not possible to sanitize the area, the area must be made inaccessible to children.
  - (d) Outdoor preschools operating on public park land may not be able to use bleach or other chemicals due to environmental impact. Outdoor preschools must work with the park's director, or designee, on the appropriate way to sanitize the area or remove contaminated materials from the outdoor preschool program space.

#### 0241 Cleaning schedules.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must follow all applicable licensing requirements regarding the cleaning schedules of the licensed indoor space and fenced playground, unless otherwise stated in these standards.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must develop and follow a cleaning schedule that includes cleaning:
  - (a) Food preparation areas and surfaces, which must be cleaned and sanitized before and after each meal and snack with single use paper towels or one-time use wiping cloths;
  - (b) Eating utensils, bottles, drinking equipment, and dishes, which must be cleaned and sanitized after each use;
  - (c) Appliances used to prepare food, which must be cleaned after each use and sanitized daily or more often as needed;
  - (d) Refrigerators and freezers, which must be cleaned and sanitized monthly or more often as needed;
  - (e) Toys, which must be cleaned and sanitized as follows:
    - i. When a toy comes into contact with a child's mouth or bodily fluids it must be removed from use until it can be cleaned and sanitized prior to reuse;
    - ii. All other toys must be cleaned and sanitized weekly or more often as needed; and
    - iii. Collected natural materials, such as sticks, leaves, or pinecones, that are used as toys may not be able to be sanitized but must be checked to confirm they do not contain toxins or animal droppings prior to use in the program.
  - (f) Furniture and equipment, which must be cleaned monthly or more often as needed.
- (3) Machine washable clothes provided by the outdoor preschool program must be laundered as needed.
- (4) Sleeping equipment must be:
  - (a) Cleaned and sanitized after each use if used by more than one child; or
  - (b) Cleaned and sanitized weekly or more often as needed if assigned to only one child.
- (5) Bedding must be:
  - (a) Laundered and sanitized after each use if used by more than one child; or
  - (b) Laundered and sanitized weekly or more often as needed if assigned to only one child.
- (6) Outdoor sinks used for gardening should be cleaned and sanitized as needed.
- (7) Toileting and diaper changing areas including, but not limited to, toilets, counters, sinks, and floors must be cleaned and disinfected daily or more often as needed.
- (8) Diaper changing tables and changing pads must be cleaned and disinfected between children, even if using a nonabsorbent covering that is discarded after each use.
- (9) Garbage cans and receptacles must be emptied on a daily basis and cleaned and disinfected as needed.
- (10) Diaper receptacles must be emptied, cleaned, and disinfected daily or as needed. Contents of a diaper receptacle must be removed from the licensed space, and replaced with a new liner.
- (11) Outdoor preschools providing or utilizing a portable chemical toilet must ensure that:

- (a) Toilets are serviced on a regular schedule. Servicing must include the use of a disinfectant for cleaning urinals and seats, removing waste from containers, recharging containers with an odor controlling chemical and installing an adequate supply of toilet tissue.
  - (b) Maintenance and service is performed in accordance with local codes by approved servicing organizations, and waste is disposed in accordance with the requirements of local health department regulations.
  - (c) Removal of waste must be handled in a clean and sanitary manner by means of a vacuum hose and received by a leak-proof tank truck.
  - (d) Provisions are made so service trucks have a clear approach and convenient access to the toilets to be serviced.
- (12) Floors in utilized indoor spaces must be cleaned by either sweeping or vacuuming at least once per day or more often as needed.
- (13) Carpets or area rugs soiled with bodily fluids must be cleaned and disinfected with high heat or an EPA registered product. An outdoor preschool provider must limit exposure to blood and body fluids during cleanup.

#### 0245 Laundry and equipment.

- (1) If applicable, outdoor preschool providers must comply with all licensing requirements for laundry and equipment. Outdoor preschools that do not have an indoor facility but are required to launder hand-towels, clothing, bedding, or other items must comply with the following:
  - (a) Laundry and laundry equipment used by an outdoor preschool program must be inaccessible to children and separated from areas where food is prepared to prevent cross contamination.
  - (b) Dirty or soiled laundry must be:
    - i. Kept separate from clean laundry;
    - ii. Cleaned with laundry soap or detergent;
    - iii. Rinsed; and
    - iv. Sanitized:
      - (A) With bleach or a similar sanitizer registered by the EPA; or
      - (B) By using a "sanitize" setting on a washing machine or dryer that reaches at least one-hundred forty degrees Fahrenheit.
- (2) If an outdoor preschool program allows parents or staff to share laundering responsibilities by laundering at their private residence; the outdoor preschool must have a policy to ensure parents or staff are aware of the requirements of this section, and must include in the parent handbook the requirements of the shared laundering practice.

#### 0250 Private septic systems.

- (1) If an outdoor preschool program is served by a private septic system, the septic system must be designed, constructed, and maintained in accordance with state and local health jurisdiction requirements.
  - (a) A private septic system must be inspected by a septic system maintenance service provider approved by the local health jurisdiction and monitored on a routine basis. Any deficiencies noted in an inspection report must be corrected with the necessary permits and inspections.
  - (b) The most recent private septic system pumping and inspection records must be kept on the licensed premises or in the program's administrative office.

- (c) If an outdoor preschool provider does not have the documentation described in subsection (1)(b) of this section, the provider must obtain such documentation from the state, local health jurisdiction, or a department approved private company within six months of the date the provider is approved by DCYF to operate an outdoor preschool program.
  - (d) An outdoor preschool provider must immediately notify the department and local health jurisdiction if there is a problem, concern, or malfunction with a private septic system.
  - (e) If a private septic system problem, concern, or malfunction interferes with the proper care of children and an approved alternative is not available, the state, local health jurisdiction, or department may require an outdoor preschool program to close until the system is inspected, repaired, and approved by the local health jurisdiction.
- (2) Pursuant to standard 0146(2), playground design must not:
    - (a) Interfere with access to or the operation of a private septic system, including a private septic system's drain field and tanks; or
    - (b) Be located or placed in a way that impacts the private septic system's drain field or tanks as determined by local officials.
  - (3) Outdoor preschools that utilize a water-conserving toilet and greywater system, pursuant to standard 0220, must ensure that children do not play in areas contaminated by greywater.

#### 0255 Pest control.

- (1) Unless otherwise described in these standards, an outdoor preschool provider must follow all applicable pest control licensing requirements.
- (2) Outdoor preschools operating in natural environments must prevent and manage the children's exposure to toxic or infectious agents, such as toxic animal waste, bee stings, toxic plants or fungi. Pursuant to standards 0225, 0240, and 0505 the outdoor preschool must notify staff, parents and guardians if pesticides are applied on or near the outdoor preschool program space.
- (3) Outdoor preschools operating on public park land must work with their park's director or designees to comply with the following:
  - (a) **Notification.** If pesticides are used and except in the case of an emergency (discovery of a wasp nest), the outdoor preschool provider must notify the parents or guardians of enrolled children at least forty-eight hours before application what pesticide will be applied and where it will be applied.
  - (b) **Application.** Pesticides must not be applied to outdoor preschool program space when children are present.

#### 0260 Storage of hazardous and maintenance supplies.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must ensure all poisonous or dangerous substances including, but not limited to, fuels, solvents, oils, laundry, dishwasher, other detergents, sanitizing products, disinfectants and items labeled "keep out of reach of children" are stored as follows:
  - (a) In a location that is inaccessible to children;
  - (b) Separate and apart from food preparation areas, food items, and food supplies;
  - (c) In their original containers or clearly labeled with the name of the product if not in the original container;

- (d) In compliance with the manufacturer's directions (including, not storing products near heat sources); and
  - (e) Outdoor preschool providers that operate their program on public land must implement appropriate planning, supervision, and intervention to ensure that children do not have access to poisonous or dangerous substances.
- (2) Storage areas and storage rooms must:
  - (a) Be inaccessible to children;
  - (b) Have locking doors or other methods to prevent child access;
  - (c) Have moisture resistant and easily cleanable floors;
  - (d) Have a designated maintenance or janitorial utility sink, or another method to dispose of wastewater (kitchen sinks must not be used for disposal of wastewater); and
  - (e) Be kept clean and sanitary.
- (3) Saws, power tools, lawn mowers, toilet plungers, toilet brushes, and other maintenance and janitorial equipment must be inaccessible to children.
- (4) Outdoor preschools using developmentally appropriate tools, including ropes or sharp objects, in wilderness activities must make such tools inaccessible to children when not in use or under active supervision.

## SLEEP AND REST

### 0265 Sleep, rest, and equipment.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must offer a supervised daily rest period for children preschool age and younger who remain in care for more than six hours per day, or who show a need for rest.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must provide quiet activities for children who do not require rest. Quiet activities must be minimally disruptive to sleeping children.
- (3) An outdoor preschool provider must communicate a child's sleep needs and patterns with that child's parent or guardian.
- (4) An outdoor preschool provider must not place children directly on the floor to rest or sleep.
- (5) For children not using cribs or playpens, an outdoor preschool provider must provide developmentally appropriate mats, cots, or other sleep equipment made of water resistant material that can be cleaned and sanitized.
- (6) Mats, cots, and other sleep equipment used in an outdoor preschool program must be:
  - (a) In good condition, have no tears or holes, and have no repairs with tape;
  - (b) Cleaned, sanitized, and air dried at least once per week or more often as needed if used by only one child, or after each use if used by more than one child; and
  - (c) Stored so sleeping surfaces are not touching each other unless cleaned and sanitized after each use.
- (7) Floor mats designed for sleeping and mattresses must be at least one inch thick. For outdoor preschools, inflatable sleeping pads must be suitable for the outdoor temperature according to the manufacturer's label. Inflatable sleeping pads less than one inch thick must be approved by the department.
- (8) Floor mats must be spaced apart from other floor mats, sleeping pads, cots, and mattresses to reduce germ exposure and allow outdoor preschool providers' access to each child during sleep time as follows:



- (a) There must be at least eighteen inches on each side between each floor mat, sleeping pad, cot, or mattress; and
  - (b) Floor mats, sleeping pads, cots, and mattresses must be arranged so children are head to toe, or toe to toe.
- (9) Each child's bedding must:
  - (a) Have a clean sheet or blanket to cover the sleeping surface and a clean blanket for the child that is suitable given the child's size and room temperature. For outdoor preschools, children may use sleeping bags suitable for the outdoor temperature if the child is sleeping or resting outside;
  - (b) Be laundered weekly or more often if soiled, or laundered daily if used by more than one child; and
  - (c) Be stored separately from bedding used by another child, unless it is cleaned and sanitized after each use.
- (10) An outdoor preschool provider must not allow children less than six years of age to use loft style beds or upper bunks of bunk beds.
- (11) If children are resting or sleeping outside, they must be protected from the sun, rain, and extreme weather, such as by the use of tarps or tents.

## INTERACTIONS AND CURRICULUM

### Learning Supports

#### 0300 Individual care plan.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must develop an individual care plan for each child with special needs and must notify the department when a child with special needs is enrolled or identified in the outdoor preschool program. Plans and documentation required under this section must:
  - (a) Meet the requirements of this section;
  - (b) Be available for department review;
  - (c) Have written permission from a child's parent or guardian stating that a visiting health professional may provide services to the child at the outdoor preschool program, if applicable;
  - (d) If applicable, have verification that outdoor preschool program staff involved with a particular child have been trained on implementing the individual care plan for that child;
  - (e) Be updated annually or when there is a change in the child's special needs; and
  - (f) Be kept in the child's file.
- (2) The individual care plan must be signed by the parent or guardian and may be developed using a department provided template.
  - (a) The individual care plan must contain:
    - i. The child's diagnosis, if known;
    - ii. Contact information for the primary health care provider or other relevant specialist;
    - iii. A list of medications to be administered at scheduled times, or during an emergency along with descriptions of symptoms that would trigger emergency medication;

- iv. Directions on how to administer medication;
  - v. Allergies;
  - vi. Food allergy and dietary needs, pursuant to standard 0186;
  - vii. Activity, behavioral, or environmental modifications for the child;
  - viii. Known symptoms and triggers;
  - ix. Emergency response plans and what procedures to perform; and
  - x. Suggested special skills training, and education for outdoor preschool program staff, including specific pediatric first aid and CPR for special health care needs.
- (b) An outdoor preschool provider must have supporting documentation of the child's special needs provided by the child's licensed or certified:
- i. Physician or physician's assistant;
  - ii. Mental health professional;
  - iii. Education professional;
  - iv. Social worker with a bachelor's degree or higher with a specialization in the individual child's needs; or
  - v. Registered nurse or advanced registered nurse practitioner.
- (3) An outdoor preschool provider's written plan and documentation for accommodations must be informed by any existing:
- (a) Individual education plan (IEP);
  - (b) Individual health plan (IHP);
  - (c) 504 Plan; or
  - (d) Individualized family service plan (IFSP).

### 0305 Curriculum philosophy and planning.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must have a written curriculum philosophy that describes the program of planned daily activities related to early childhood or child development.
- (2) The curriculum philosophy must address all age groups being served, be informed by the Washington state early learning and development guidelines, and may include:
  - (a) How children develop emotionally, socially, cognitively, and physically;
  - (b) What early learning looks like or areas of focus for each age group being served;
  - (c) How the provider will meet cultural, dual language learner, and special needs of children in care;
  - (d) How to guide learning and social interactions;
  - (e) The importance of play to a child's learning process; and
  - (f) For infants and toddlers, the importance of developing consistent, nurturing relationships with caregivers as a component of learning.
- (3) Staff must be trained on the program's curriculum philosophy.
- (4) A lead teacher must be given regularly scheduled time to plan and develop curriculum and activities. Planning may be done during rest time but all supervision requirements pursuant to standard 0345 must be met. Planning time for outdoor preschool staff implementing emergent curriculum may be spent in activities such as documenting children's learning, making plans for individualized learning goals, and gaining teacher knowledge of subject matter relevant to the children's learning goals, interests, seasons, and the environment.
- (5) An outdoor preschool provider must include in their curriculum philosophy how nature is central to their curriculum, and how learning and being outdoors in a nature-based setting impacts the program of daily activities and will benefit children.

### 0310 Concept development and feedback quality.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must facilitate activities to support child learning and understanding.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider may facilitate child learning and understanding through a variety of techniques such as:
  - (a) Using a variety of teaching strategies (different techniques, curricula, or styles) and materials to address different learning styles, abilities, developmental levels, and temperament;
  - (b) Helping children enter into and sustain play;
  - (c) Encouraging children to participate by asking questions and providing guidance;
  - (d) Providing opportunities for children's creativity;
  - (e) Linking concepts and activities to one another and to the children's lives and interests;
  - (f) Noticing and responding to teachable moments;
  - (g) Clarifying and expanding children's understanding;
  - (h) Describing and discussing children's learning processes;
  - (i) Encouraging children's efforts and persistence;
  - (j) Showing tolerance for mistakes;
  - (k) Using diverse vocabulary;
  - (l) Leading discussions and activities;
  - (m) Providing materials during the day, including daily routines such as meals and transitions, to encourage communication in English and children's home languages when possible; and
  - (n) Use scaffolding methods to gradually move children toward stronger understanding and greater independence in the learning process.
- (3) Outdoor preschools, as nature-based programs, must emphasize the children's exploration of the natural world. This must be accomplished by implementing the techniques described in subsections (2)(a) through (2)(n) of this section, and providing modeling and teaching that encourages:
  - (a) Opportunities for child-directed inquiry;
  - (b) The children's curiosity through open-ended experiences and questioning;
  - (c) Respectful, reciprocal, and sustainable interactions with nature, including the local fauna, flora, and delicate ecosystems; and
  - (d) Engaging children in diverse environments.
- (4) Outdoor preschools, as operating primarily outside and potentially in un-enclosed spaces, must prioritize behavior management and children's development of habits that keep them safe in such environments. This must be accomplished by:
  - (a) Establishing boundaries through visual cues, such as cones or rope.
  - (b) Teaching children to respond to verbal instructions to stop and return, either through words or the use of other calls,
  - (c) The appropriate use of consequence for unsafe behaviors,
  - (d) Pursuant to standard 0315, engaging children in developmentally appropriate assessment of risky play.
  - (e) Ensuring children are engaged in areas that suit the developmental level of their behaviors, and
  - (f) Positioning staff at locations within the outdoor preschool to ensure the outdoor preschool provider has the ability to respond to dangerous situations.

### 0315 Language modeling and reasoning.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must be aware of and responsive to children's developmental, linguistic, cultural, and academic needs.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must be aware of and responsive to children's needs by engaging in activities such as:
  - (a) Asking developmentally appropriate questions for the age group and allow children to answer without interruption from the provider;
  - (b) Circulating among the children during free choice activities and talking with children about what they are doing;
  - (c) Using teaching techniques such as:
    - i. Self-talk: When the provider talks about what he or she is doing, seeing, eating, touching, or thinking as he or she is involved in that activity;
    - ii. Parallel-talk: When the provider talks about what the child is doing, seeing, eating, or touching as the child is engaging in those activities; or
    - iii. Language expansion: When the provider adds detail or new words to build on ideas that children are expressing.
  - (d) An outdoor preschool provider must use language to develop and encourage reasoning skills by using techniques such as:
    - i. Talking about logical relationships or concepts during the day including, but not limited to, the daily schedule, the differences and similarities between objects, or people in the classroom;
    - ii. Introducing concepts using guiding questions that encourage children to figure out cause and effect relationships;
    - iii. Providing opportunities for reading and writing activities; and
    - iv. Asking open ended questions to help children improve skills and acquire knowledge.
  - (e) An outdoor preschool provider working with non-English speaking children must encourage language development and acquisition by using techniques such as:
    - i. Using words in various languages to talk about the routines;
    - ii. Reading books out loud or using audio books; and
    - iii. Playing games in different languages.
- (3) An outdoor preschool provider, in addition to carrying out benefit-risk assessments pursuant to standard 0471, must engage children in a developmentally appropriate assessment of risky play. This must be accomplished by:
  - (a) Providing greater supervision as children engage in new levels of risky play.
  - (b) Using questioning and scaffolding to help children determine risks and ways to mitigate risk.
  - (c) Prohibiting staff from physically placing children into risky situations, such as in trees or on top of boulders.
  - (d) Staff encouraging children to accept their current levels of ability as they work towards goals.

### 0320 Facilitating child interests, learning, perspective, and productivity.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must work to maximize children's interests, engagement with developmentally and culturally responsive activities, and ability to learn from play.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must maximize children's interests, engagement, and abilities by using techniques such as:

- (a) Maximizing learning time with learning materials and products, limiting disruptions during activities, and offering additional choices when activities are completed;
  - (b) Giving clear instructions and directions; and
  - (c) Making opportunities for children to learn during transitions by clearly communicating expectations and keeping transitions to a duration that is developmentally appropriate.
- (3) An outdoor preschool provider must offer developmentally and culturally responsive activities that offer a range of auditory, visual, and movement opportunities by using techniques such as:
  - (a) Encourage child engagement;
  - (b) Promote each child's self-help and social skills;
  - (c) Organized around child interests and ideas;
  - (d) Allow choice, exploration, and experimentation;
  - (e) Promote active and play-based learning experiences;
  - (f) Allow children freedom to move during activities;
  - (g) Ensure child expression;
  - (h) Utilize interesting and creative materials;
  - (i) Offer hands-on opportunities for children;
  - (j) Provide opportunity for children to direct their own learning and problem solving rather than teacher-directed activities; and
  - (k) Orient and guide children toward learning objectives.

## Emotional Support and Classroom Organization

### 0325 Creating a climate for healthy child development.

- (1) When communicating or interacting with children, an outdoor preschool provider must maintain a climate for healthy, culturally responsive child development such as:
  - (a) Using a calm and respectful tone of voice;
  - (b) Using positive language to explain what children can do, and give descriptive feedback;
  - (c) Having relaxed conversations with children by listening and responding to what they say. Adult conversations must not dominate the overall sound of the group;
  - (d) Greeting children upon arrival and departure at the outdoor preschool program;
  - (e) Using facial expressions such as smiling, laughing, and enthusiasm to match a child's mood;
  - (f) Using physical proximity in a culturally responsive way to speak to children at their eye level and with warm physical contact including, but not limited to, gently touching a hand or shoulder, sitting next to a child, appropriately holding younger children close while communicating;
  - (g) Validating children's feelings and show tolerance for mistakes;
  - (h) Being responsive and listening to children's requests and questions, encouraging children to share experiences, ideas, and feelings;
  - (i) Observing children in order to learn about their families, cultures, individual interests, ideas, questions, and theories;



- (j) Modeling and teaching emotional skills such as recognizing feelings, expressing them appropriately, accepting others' feelings, and controlling impulses to act out feelings;
  - (k) Representing the diversity found in the outdoor preschool program and society, including gender, age, language, and abilities, while being respectful of cultural traditions, values, religion and beliefs of enrolled families;
  - (l) Interacting with staff and other adults in a positive, respectful manner; and
  - (m) For outdoor preschools, encouraging the development of a caring relationship with the environment.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must encourage positive interactions between and among children with techniques such as:
- (a) Giving children several chances a day to interact with each other while playing or completing routine tasks;
  - (b) Modeling social skills;
  - (c) Encouraging socially isolated children to find friends;
  - (d) Helping children understand feelings of others; and
  - (e) Including children with special needs to play with others.

#### 0330 Positive relationships and child guidance.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must work to maintain positive relationships with children by using consistent guidance techniques to help children learn. Guidance techniques must adapt an outdoor preschool program's environment, routines, and activities to a child's strengths, developmental level, abilities, culture, community, and relate to the child's behavior.
- (2) Guidance techniques may include:
- (a) Coaching behavior;
  - (b) Modeling and teaching social skills such as taking turns, cooperation, waiting, self-control, respect for the rights of others, treating others kindly, and conflict resolution;
  - (c) Offering choices;
  - (d) Distracting;
  - (e) Redirecting or helping a child change their focus to something appropriate to achieve their goal;
  - (f) Planning ahead to prevent problems and letting children know what events will happen next;
  - (g) Explaining consistent, clear rules and involving children in defining simple, clear classroom limits;
  - (h) Involving children in solving problems; and
  - (i) Explaining to children the natural and logical consequence related to the child's behavior in a reasonable and developmentally appropriate manner.

#### 0331 Prohibited behavior, discipline, and physical removal of children.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must take steps to prevent and, once aware of, must not tolerate:
- (a) Profanity, obscene language, "put downs," or cultural or racial slurs;
  - (b) Angry or hostile interactions;
  - (c) Threats of physical harm or inappropriate discipline such as, but not limited to, spanking, biting, jerking, kicking, hitting, slapping, grabbing, shaking,

- pulling hair, pushing, shoving, throwing a child, or inflicting pain or humiliation as a punishment;
- (d) Intimidation, gestures, or verbal abuse including sarcasm, name calling, shaming, humiliation, teasing, derogatory remarks about a child or the child's family;
- (e) Emotional abuse including victimizing, bullying, rejecting, terrorizing, extensive ignoring, or corrupting a child;
- (f) Prevent a child from or punish a child for exercising religious rights; or
- (g) Actions that involve:
  - i. Restricting a child's breathing;
  - ii. Binding or restricting a child's movement unless permitted under – standard 0335;
  - iii. Taping a child's nose, mouth, or other body part;
  - iv. Depriving a child of sleep, food, clothing, shelter, physical activity, first aid, or regular or emergency medical or dental care;
  - v. Forcing a child to ingest something as punishment such as hot sauce or soap;
  - vi. Interfering with a child's ability to take care of his or her own hygiene and toileting needs;
  - vii. Using toilet learning or training methods that punish, demean, or humiliate a child;
  - viii. Withholding hygiene care, toileting care, or diaper changing from any child unable to provide such care for himself or herself;
  - ix. Exposing a child to extreme temperatures as punishment;
  - x. Demanding excessive physical exercise or strenuous postures. Excessive physical exercise includes, but is not limited to, running laps around the yard until overly tired, an extensive number of push-ups, having a child rest more than the child's development requires, standing on one foot for an uncomfortable amount of time, or holding out one's arms until tired or painful;
  - xi. Placing the separated child in a closet, bathroom, locked room, outside, or in an unlicensed space; and
  - xii. Using high chairs, car seats, or other confining space or equipment to punish a child or restrict movement.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must supervise to protect children from the harmful acts of other children. A provider must immediately intervene when they become aware that a child or children are teasing, fighting, bullying, intimidating, or becoming physically aggressive.
- (3) An outdoor preschool provider may separate a child from other children when that child needs to regain control of him or herself.
  - (a) During separation time, the child must remain under the appropriate supervision level of a licensee, center director, assistant director, program supervisor, lead teacher or an assistant teacher.
  - (b) Separation time should be minimized and appropriate to the needs of the individual child.
- (4) If a child is separated from other children, an outdoor preschool provider must:
  - (a) Consider the child's developmental level, language skills, individual and special needs, and ability to understand the consequences of his or her actions; and

- (b) Communicate to the child the reason for being separated from the other children.
- (5) If an outdoor preschool provider follows all strategies in this section, and a child continues to behave in an unsafe manner, only a licensee, center director, assistant director, program supervisor, lead teacher, or an assistant teacher may physically remove the child to a less stimulating environment. Staff must remain calm and use a calm voice when directing or removing the child. Physical removal of a child is determined by that child's ability to walk:
  - (a) If the child is willing and able to walk, staff may hold the child's hand and walk him or her away from the situation.
  - (b) If the child is not willing or able to walk, staff may pick the child up and remove him or her to a quiet place where the child cannot hurt themselves or others.

### 0335 Physical restraint.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must have written physical restraint protocols pursuant to standard 0490, and implement such protocols only when appropriate and after complying with all requirements of standards 0330 and 0331.
- (2) Physical restraint must only be used if a child's safety or the safety of others is threatened, and must be:
  - (a) Limited to holding a child as gently as possible to accomplish restraint;
  - (b) Limited to the minimum amount of time necessary to control the situation;
  - (c) Developmentally appropriate; and
  - (d) Only performed by outdoor preschool providers that are trained in restraint techniques pursuant to standard 0106(7). If a provider has not received restraint training, the provider may only use limited physical restraint when:
    - i. Protecting a child from serious injury;
    - ii. Obtaining possession of a weapon or other dangerous object; or
    - iii. Protecting property from serious damage.
- (3) No person may use bonds, ties, blankets, straps, car seats, high chairs, activity saucers, or heavy weights (including an adult sitting on a child) to physically restrain children.
- (4) Licensees, directors, assistant directors, program supervisors, lead teachers or trained staff must remove him or herself from a situation if they sense a loss of their own self-control and concern for the child when using a restraint technique if another outdoor preschool provider is present. If an outdoor preschool provider observes another staff using inappropriate restraint techniques, the staff must intervene.
- (5) If physical restraint, including limited restraint as described in subsection (2) (d) of this section, is used, staff must:
  - (a) Report the use of physical restraint to the child's parent or guardian as soon as possible, but no later than the release of the child at the end of the day.
  - (b) Assess any incident of physical restraint to determine if the decision to use physical restraint and its application was appropriate;
  - (c) Document the incident in the child's file, including the date, time, outdoor preschool program staff involved, duration and what happened before, during and after the child was restrained;
  - (d) Develop a written plan with input from the child's primary care or mental health provider, and the parents or guardians to address underlying issues and to reduce the need for further physical restraint if:

- i. Physical restraint has been used more than once; and
  - ii. A plan is not already a part of the child's individual care plan.
- (e) Notify the department when a written plan has been developed.

### 0340 Expulsion.

- (1) Pursuant to standard 0486 and to promote consistent care and maximize opportunities for child development and learning, an outdoor preschool provider must develop, implement, and follow expulsion policies and practices.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider may expel a child only if:
  - (a) The child exhibits behavior that presents a serious safety concern for that child or others; and
  - (b) The program is unable to reduce or eliminate the safety concern through reasonable modifications.
- (3) If a child is expelled, an outdoor preschool provider must:
  - (a) Review the program's expulsion policy with the child's parent or guardian;
  - (b) Provide a record to the parent or guardian about the expulsion and the steps that were taken to avoid expulsion. The record must include the date, time, outdoor preschool program staff involved, and details of each incident that led to expulsion; and
  - (c) Provide information to the parent or guardian that includes, but is not limited to, community-based resources that may benefit the child.
- (4) The outdoor preschool provider must report to the department when children are expelled. The information must include:
  - (a) Child demographic data including, but not limited to, the age, race, ethnicity, and gender of the child;
  - (b) The reason the child was expelled; and
  - (c) The resources that were provided to the parent or guardian.

## Program Structure and Organization

### 0345 Supervising children.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must only allow the following persons to have unsupervised access to a child in care:
  - (a) The child's own parent or guardian;
  - (b) Licensees or outdoor preschool program staff authorized by the department under chapter 110-06 WAC;
  - (c) A government representative including an emergency responder who has specific and verifiable authority for access, supported by documentation; and
  - (d) A person authorized in writing or by telephone by the child's parent or guardian.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must meet capacity, group size, and staff-to-child ratios while children are in care. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - (a) Indoor and outdoor play activities;
  - (b) Off-site activities;
  - (c) During transportation;
  - (d) Meal times;

- (e) Rest periods; and
  - (f) When children are on different floor levels of an indoor early learning program space.
- (3) An outdoor preschool provider must supervise children in care by:
- (a) Scanning the environment, looking for, and listening for both verbal and nonverbal cues to anticipate problems and plan accordingly;
  - (b) Visibly checking children on many occasions with little time in between. For outdoor preschools, "visibly checking" must include knowing where all the children are located;
  - (c) Positioning him or herself to supervise all areas accessible to children;
  - (d) Attending to children and being aware of what children are doing at all times;
  - (e) Being available and able to promptly assist or redirect a child as necessary; and
  - (f) Considering the following when deciding whether increased supervision is needed:
    - i. Ages of children;
    - ii. Individual differences and abilities of children;
    - iii. Layout of the indoor and outdoor licensed space and play area;
    - iv. The risk associated with the activities children are engaged in; and
    - v. Any nearby hazards including those in the licensed or unlicensed space.
  - (g) All children must remain actively supervised by at least one staff member at all times.
  - (h) Ensuring staff are equipped with cell phones or walkie-talkies at all times for the purpose of communicating, when necessary, with other staff.
- (4) An outdoor preschool program staff member may undertake other activities for a temporary time period when not required to be providing the active supervision required under subsection (5)(b) of this section or when following a missing child protocol, pursuant to standard 0471 (2) (m). Such activities include, but are not limited to, cleaning up after an activity or preparing items for a new activity. The outdoor preschool staff member must remain in visual or auditory range, and be available and able to respond to the children's needs.
- (5) An outdoor preschool provider must:
- (a) Not use devices such as a baby monitors, video monitors, or mirrors in place of supervision.
  - (b) Actively supervise children when the children:
    - i. Interact with pets or animals;
    - ii. Engage in water or sand play;
    - iii. Play in an area adjacent to a body of water;
    - iv. Engage in cooking activities;
    - v. Engage in water activities;
    - vi. Engage in campfire activities;
    - vii. Engage in climbing activities;
    - viii. Engage in tool use activities;
    - ix. Ride on public transportation;
    - x. During field trips; and
    - xi. During hikes or walks.



### 0350 Supervising children during water activities.

- (1) During water activities, an outdoor preschool provider must comply with all supervision requirements described in this section and standard 0345.
- (2) Before a child can participate in water activities, the outdoor preschool provider must obtain written permission from the child's parent or guardian that allows the child to participate in such activities. An outdoor preschool within a quarter mile of an accessible body of water more than 4 inches deep must also obtain from the parent or guardian a signed hazard waiver under standard 0471.
- (3) For water activities where the water is more than twenty-four inches deep, an outdoor preschool provider must ensure that:
  - (a) A certified lifeguard is present and on duty; and
  - (b) A staff member or volunteer counted in the ratio may be the certified lifeguard.
- (4) An outdoor preschool provider must have life-saving equipment that is readily accessible during water activities if a pool or body of water is six feet or more in any direction and two feet or more in depth. Life-saving equipment may include a ring buoy and rope, a rescue tube, or a throwing line and a shepherd's hook that will not conduct electricity.
- (5) At least one attending staff person must be able to swim when children are within one quarter mile of an accessible body of water more than four inches deep (for example, a park with a lake or stream), regardless of whether or not the children are engaging in a water activity.

### 0351 Outdoor preschool campfire activity supervision and safety.

- (1) To engage in a campfire activity, an outdoor preschool provider must have permission from the landowner or park's director, and comply with this section.
- (2) Pursuant to standard 0471, an outdoor preschool provider must have signed written permission for campfire activities from each child's parent or guardian in the form of a hazard waiver.
- (3) Pursuant to standard 0110(5), staff must be trained on the program's campfire policies and procedures prior to leading a campfire activity, and outdoor preschool providers must train, evaluate, and keep a written record of the staff's ability to build and extinguish a fire according to the rules of this section.
- (4) Outdoor preschool providers must prepare and retain a record that the safe campfire practices required under this section have been carried out for each campfire activity. Compliance with this subsection may include the creation of a checklist by the provider that describes the safe campfire practices that were followed before and after each campfire activity.
- (5) The outdoor preschool provider must have a first aid kit near the campfire that is equipped with first aid supplies made specifically to treat fire related injuries including, but not limited to, a fire blanket and sterile, non-adhesive bandages. Staff must be prepared to smother a fire on a child's clothing or hair using equipment including, but not limited to, water, a fire suppression blanket, or fire extinguisher.
- (6) An outdoor preschool provider must create a clearly visible boundary at least three feet away from the outer edge of the fire pit or structure containing the fire. This boundary may be delineated by a rope, large rocks, or seating area of logs or camp-chairs. The area within the three foot boundary must:
  - (a) At all times be clear of tripping hazards such as bags or other materials; and

- (b) Have space in between the logs, camp-chairs, or other seating so that children and adults easily move into and out of the seating area.
- (7) Campfires must be built and extinguished according to safe fire practices provided by the US Forest Service at <https://smokeybear.com/en/prevention-how-tos/campfire-safety>, and:
  - (a) Campfires must not be built during periods of high fire danger in the area;
  - (b) A campfire must not be more than two feet in diameter;
  - (c) All campfires must be in a fire pit or structure that is designed for the express purpose of safely containing a campfire. The perimeter of the fire pit must be delineated and clearly visible to children, such as by rocks, a metal ring, or bricks;
  - (d) Each outdoor preschool class cannot have more than one campfire activity at any time; and
  - (e) Before starting a campfire activity, the outdoor preschool provider must have the necessary equipment and supplies to safely extinguish a campfire. For purposes of this subsection equipment and supplies includes, but is not limited to, sufficient water and a shovel. Fire extinguishers kept on-site must comply with the requirements contained in standard 0170.
- (8) While a campfire is burning, an outdoor preschool provider must remain within the three foot boundary around the fire to respond to any fire-tending needs and to prevent children from coming into close contact with the fire.
- (9) There must be a one-to-one (1:1) staff-to-child ratio for any child within the three-foot boundary around the fire. A staff member must remain within arms' reach of that child, and the child may only assist in setting up or tending to the fire in a developmentally appropriate way, such as by placing kindling or small sticks.
- (10) The outdoor preschool provider must use developmentally appropriate teaching practices to ensure children understand safe behavior around a campfire, prior to any campfire activity.
- (11) Adults and children tending the fire must tie back long hair and secure loose clothing to reduce the risk of catching fire.
- (12) The outdoor preschool provider and staff must prevent children from running and pushing within six feet of the edge of the fire-pit.

#### 0354 Indoor early learning program space capacity.

If applicable, outdoor preschool providers must comply with all applicable licensing requirements for indoor early learning program space capacity.

#### 0355 Family home capacity, ratio, and group size.

Outdoor preschool providers that utilize a family home indoor early learning program space or fenced playground must comply with the applicable capacity, ratio, and group size requirements of a licensed family home.

#### 0356 Center capacity, ratio, and group size.

Outdoor preschool providers that utilize a center indoor early learning program space or fenced playground must comply with the applicable capacity, ratio, and group size requirements of a licensed center.

### 0358 Outdoor, nature-based preschool capacity, ratio, and group size.

- (1) For each child attending an outdoor preschool program there must be a minimum of four-thousand (4,000) square feet of natural space per child in attendance to support a nature-based curriculum, unless otherwise approved by a park's director and the department.
- (2) For purposes of a permanently located outdoor classroom area, children receiving instruction within that area must have a minimum of thirty-five (35) square feet of space in that area per child in attendance, not including bathroom or diaper changing spaces or ground space occupied by shelves, features, or other equipment not intended to be accessible to children.
- (3) For purposes of determining capacity, the department will consider the following factors and requirements.
  - (a) The area and maximum occupancy described in the outdoor preschool program's use agreement with the landowner or Public Parks director.
  - (b) Unless otherwise approved by the park's director and the department, the licensed space of another outdoor preschool or educational program that regularly operates at the same time shall not be considered in the licensed space calculations for the area that is being licensed.
  - (c) The land's features and diversity must be sufficient to support high quality, developmentally appropriate, early childhood environmental education.
  - (d) The land's facilities, such as emergency shelters and toilets, must be sufficient to support the health and safety needs of all enrolled children.
  - (e) If an indoor space will be used for routine care only, such as toileting or handwashing, those spaces must comply with standard 0415 (Zoning, codes, and ordinances).
  - (f) If an indoor space will be used for educational activity, the program must comply with all requirements applicable to family home or center based early learning program facilities.
  - (g) An outdoor preschool provider's education and on-going training.
  - (h) An outdoor preschool provider's licensing history with the department.
  - (i) The number of qualified staff available to comply with required staff-to-child ratios.
- (4) The following space or areas must not be included in the capacity determination:
  - (a) Unlicensed space;
  - (b) Emergency shelter space that will only be used in case of emergency.
  - (c) Toileting facilities;
  - (d) Restricted land; and
  - (e) Road-ways through parks.
- (5) The department may issue an initial outdoor preschool license. The department will not issue an outdoor preschool license to care for more children than permitted by the rules contained in these standards. The department may issue a license to care for fewer than the maximum allowable enrolled children. For each outdoor preschool license, the license will describe:
  - (a) The maximum number of children that may be in care at any one time (total capacity);
  - (b) The age range of children allowed in care; and
  - (c) The location of the program

- (6) An outdoor preschool licensee must not exceed at any time the total capacity or age range stated on the child care license. The following children are included for purposes of calculating capacity during a particular day or time:
  - (a) All children on the premises that are signed into the childcare;
  - (b) All children on an off-site trip from the outdoor preschool program;
  - (c) All children that are being transported by the outdoor preschool program staff; and
  - (d) All the provider's and staff's children.
- (7) An outdoor preschool licensee must receive department approval to care for a child with special needs if the child is older than the maximum age identified on the license. A child with documented special needs may be in care up to age nineteen and must be counted in the capacity and staff-to-child ratio. If an individual child with special needs requires individualized supervision at an outdoor preschool, a staff member providing individualized supervision for that child does not count in the staff-to-child ratio for the other children in care.
- (8) An outdoor preschool licensee must provide qualified staff to comply with staffing requirements, staff-to-child ratios, and group size during operating hours, including off-site activities or when transporting children in care.
- (9) The following ratio and group size requirements apply to each outdoor preschool class
  - (a) For preschoolers (thirty months to six years of age that are not attending kindergarten or elementary school) the maximum group size must not exceed sixteen children with a staff to child ratio of one staff member to six children. Each group must be staffed by at least two qualified staff members (staff not including aides or volunteers), and every third staff member counted in the ratio may be an aide or volunteer. Children related to the staff or licensee must be included in the ratio calculation.
  - (b) The outdoor preschool class must comply with risk-related ratio requirements including, but not limited to the following:
    - i. Providing additional staff as required by standard 0350 when children are participating in water activities.
    - ii. Providing additional staff after assessing the level of risk pursuant to standards 0345 and 0471.
  - (c) The outdoor preschool class must comply with any variance from department rules authorized under standard 0436.

#### 0360 Program and daily schedule.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must have an established program and daily schedule that is familiar to children.
- (2) A schedule must be designed to meet enrolled children's developmental, cultural, and special needs. The daily schedule must:
  - (a) Be specific for each age group of children;
  - (b) Pursuant to standard 0150, offer a variety of activities to meet the children's needs;
  - (c) Provide children access to the outdoors for more than half of their daily program schedule, and for every three hours of programming pursuant to standard 0145 at least thirty minutes of the program must promote a variety of age and developmentally appropriate active play activities for children in care.
  - (d) Include scheduled and consistent times for meal service;
  - (e) Include routine transportation times, if applicable; and

- (f) Include rest periods, if applicable.

## PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AND OVERSIGHT

### Licensing Process

#### 0400 Application materials.

- (1) After completing a department orientation, an applicant must submit a complete outdoor preschool pilot license application packet. This requirement also applies to a change of ownership. A complete license application packet must include the following:
  - (a) Professional and background information about the applicant:
    - i. A completed department application form for the type of license being applied for (i.e. outdoor preschool);
    - ii. A copy of the applicant's orientation certificate (orientation must be taken within 12 months of license application);
    - iii. A Washington state business license or a tribal, county, or city business or occupation license;
    - iv. Liability insurance;
    - v. Certificate of Incorporation, partnership agreement, or similar business organization document;
    - vi. A copy of current government issued photo identification;
    - vii. A copy of Social Security card or sworn declaration stating that the applicant does not have one;
    - viii. Employer Identification Number (EIN) if applicant plans to hire staff; and
    - ix. Employment and education verification. For example, diploma, transcripts, or a sworn declaration stating that the applicant cannot verify education requirements;
  - (b) Information about the facility and/or location to be licensed must include the following:
    - i. If applicable, a floor plan, including use of proposed licensed and unlicensed space, with identified emergency exits and emergency exit pathways.
    - ii. A map of the outdoor space with the proposed licensed natural space highlighted, a description of the current use of the proposed space, and a description of the square footage of the overall natural space, the permanently located outdoor classroom, and gross motor active play area(s). For the proposed licensed area there must also be a description of the drop-off and pick-up locations, emergency shelter, and toileting facilities (or description of alternative policies and practices).
    - iii. If applicable, a Certificate of Occupancy. For outdoor preschools, the certificate of occupancy is required for any structure intended for use by the program, including public parks land.
    - iv. If applicable, documentation that is no more than three years old received from a licensed inspector, septic designer, or engineer that reports the septic system and drain field are maintained and in good working order.
    - v. If applicable, E. coli bacteria and nitrate testing results, no more than twelve months old, for well water.



- vi. A lead or arsenic evaluation agreement for sites located in the Tacoma smelter plume (counties of King, Pierce, and Thurston).
- vii. Lead and copper test results for drinking water.
- viii. For outdoor preschools on public park land, a signed use agreement with the park's director or designee, including maximum program occupancy.
- (c) Program days and hours of operation, including closure dates and holiday observances;
- (d) Information about the outdoor preschool program staff, including the following:
  - i. Applicant name, and if applicable and known, a list of the staff person(s) and volunteer(s) required to complete the background check process under chapter 110-06 WAC; and
  - ii. Resumes for the applicant and if applicable, resumes for the Director, Assistant Director, Program Supervisor, and Family Home Lead Teacher.
- (2) An applicant must include the following policy documents with the application, which will be reviewed by the department and returned to the applicant:
  - (a) Parent and program policies;
  - (b) Staff policies;
  - (c) An emergency preparedness plan; and
  - (d) Health policies.
- (3) An applicant must submit a completed application packet at least ninety calendar days prior to the planned opening of the outdoor preschool program. The department will inspect the outdoor preschool program space and must approve all application submissions required under these standards before the department will issue a license.
  - (a) The ninety calendar days begins when the department receives a complete application packet.
  - (b) Incomplete application packets will be returned to the applicant for completion.
  - (c) An applicant that is unable to successfully complete the application and licensing process within ninety calendar days may withdraw the application and reapply when the applicant is able to meet the licensing requirements.
  - (d) Pursuant to RCW 43.216.325, an applicant that is unable to satisfy or comply with the application requirements and has not withdrawn his or her application will be denied a license.

#### 0402 Changing outdoor preschool program space or location.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must notify the department prior to making a change to outdoor preschool program space that may impact the health, safety, or welfare of enrolled children. Such changes that require prior notice to the department include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - (a) Moving outdoor preschool programs to a different location or facility (even if the new location is on the same premises);
  - (b) An outdoor preschool program altering a planned use of space including, but not limited to, the use of previously unlicensed areas or new location for a permanently located outdoor classroom;
  - (c) Modifying facilities in a way that requires a permit under the Washington state building code or by a local jurisdiction, such as remodeling or renovating emergency shelter locations;
  - (d) Changing outdoor play areas, such as adding or altering the type of surface or altering stationary climbing or play equipment; and

- (e) Any substantial modifications to the licensed area planned or implemented by the landowner.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must submit to the department the new proposed site map prior to making any of the changes described in subsections (1)(a) through (1)(c) of this section.
- (3) An outdoor preschool provider planning a change under subsection (1)(a) of this section must also:
  - (a) Submit a complete application pursuant to standard 0400 as soon as the provider decides to move and has an identified address, but not more than ninety calendar or less than thirty calendar days before moving;
  - (b) Notwithstanding the requirements described in subsection (3) (a) of this section, in the event of a natural disaster, the department may waive the 30 calendar-day requirement; and
  - (c) Not significantly change or move an outdoor preschool program until the department has first inspected the new location and determines that it complies with the requirements described in these standards.

#### 0410 License and program location.

- (1) An applicant seeking an outdoor preschool license under chapter 110-300D WAC must be at least eighteen years old.
- (2) An outdoor preschool licensee refers to the individual or organization:
  - (a) Whose name appears on an outdoor preschool license issued by the department.
  - (b) Responsible for complying with the requirements described in chapter 43.216 RCW, chapter 110-06 WAC, chapter 110-300D WAC, these standards, and other applicable laws or rules.
  - (c) Responsible for training outdoor preschool program staff about the requirements described in chapter 43.216 RCW, chapter 110-06 WAC, chapter 110-300D WAC, and these standards.
- (3) Outdoor preschool program space must be located:
  - (a) On a site free from known environmental hazards, not including hazards inherent in the natural physical features of the outdoors;
  - (b) When necessary, in an area where non-emergency services and utilities can serve the outdoor preschool program space; and
  - (c) In an area served by emergency fire, medical, and police during the hours the outdoor preschool provider provides care to children.
- (4) An outdoor preschool provider must prevent enrolled children from being exposed to the following known hazards within and around the licensed premises:
  - (a) Lead based paint;
  - (b) Plumbing and fixtures containing lead or lead solders;
  - (c) Asbestos;
  - (d) Arsenic, lead, or copper in the soil or drinking water;
  - (e) Toxic mold; and
  - (f) Other identified toxins or hazards.
  - (g) Sites undergoing remedial work by the Department of Ecology must take additional steps to ensure children do not ingest contaminated soil.
- (5) Outdoor preschools located on private property are required to place address numbers and signage at the entrance of the private property that contains the outdoor preschool program space.

- (6) A license applicant planning to open an outdoor preschool program in the designated Tacoma smelter plume (counties of King, Pierce, and Thurston) must contact the state department of ecology (DOE) and complete and sign an access agreement with DOE to evaluate the applicant's property for possible arsenic and lead soil contamination.

#### 0415 Zoning, codes, and ordinances.

- (1) The department adopts and incorporates by reference the Washington state building code (chapter 19.27 RCW), as now and hereafter amended.
- (2) Outdoor preschool program space must comply with the Washington state building code or local building code as enacted at the time of licensure. Facility modifications must comply with standard 0402.
- (3) Prior to licensing, an applicant must contact state, city, and local agencies that regulate the outdoor preschool program. An outdoor preschool provider must obtain regulations and comply with the direction given by such agencies. These agencies may include, but are not limited to, the Washington state department of labor and industries, the Washington state fire marshal, the Washington state department of health, local health jurisdictions, and public parks directors.
- (4) Before issuing a license to an outdoor preschool provider that plans on using an indoor facility for part of its program that is not currently licensed, the outdoor preschool provider must:
  - (a) Obtain a certificate of occupancy issued by the local building, planning, or zoning department, or a local equivalent if a locality does not have the certificate of occupancy; and
  - (b) Be inspected and approved by the state fire marshal or local authority as approved by the department.

#### 0420 Prohibited substances.

- (1) Chapter 70.160 RCW prohibits smoking in public places and places of employment. Outdoor preschools must comply with the rules of the landowner, and the rules contained in these standards.
- (2) Pursuant to RCW 70.160.050, an outdoor preschool provider must:
  - (a) Prohibit smoking, vaping, or similar activities in licensed indoor space, even during nonbusiness hours;
  - (b) Prohibit smoking, vaping, or similar activities in licensed outdoor space unless:
    - i. The smoking, vaping or similar activities occurs during nonbusiness hours; or
    - ii. The smoking, vaping or similar activities occurs in an area for smoking or vaping tobacco products that is not a "public place" or "place of employment," as defined in RCW 70.160.020.
    - iii. The outdoor preschool is operated on public land where the law allows members of the public to smoke in the area, in which case outdoor preschool providers must protect children from second-hand smoke.
  - (c) Prohibit smoking, vaping, or similar activities in motor vehicles used to transport enrolled children;
  - (d) Prohibit smoking, vaping, or similar activities by any provider who is supervising children, including during field trips;
  - (e) Prohibit smoking, vaping, or similar activities within twenty-five feet from entrances, exits, operable windows, and vents, pursuant to RCW 70.160.075; and

- (f) Post "no smoking or vaping" signs. Signs must be clearly visible and located at each building entrance used as part of an indoor early learning program space. For outdoor preschools operating on private land it is the landowner's duty to post "no smoking" signs.
- (3) An outdoor preschool provider must:
  - (a) Prohibit any staff person from consuming or being under the influence of alcohol on licensed space during business hours;
  - (b) Prohibit any staff person within licensed space from consuming or being under the influence of illegal drugs or misused prescription drugs.
  - (c) Prohibit any staff person from consuming smokeless cannabis products in licensed space during business hours.
  - (d) Store any tobacco or vapor products, packaging of tobacco or vapor products, cannabis or associated paraphernalia, or alcohol (both open and closed containers) in a space that is inaccessible to children;
  - (e) Prohibit children from accessing cigarette or cigar butts or ashes;
  - (f) Protect children from members of the public consuming or under the influence of alcohol, legal drugs, illegal drugs or misused prescription drugs.

#### 0425 Initial, non-expiring, dual licenses, and license modification.

- (1) Pursuant to RCW 43.216.315, the department may issue an initial license to an outdoor preschool program applicant if the applicant demonstrates compliance with chapter 110-06 WAC, standard 0400, and compliance with site requirements through an initial inspection; but is not in full compliance with all other requirements described in these standards, or chapter 100-300D WAC.
  - (a) An initial license is valid for six months from the date issued.
  - (b) At the department's discretion, an initial license may be extended for up to three additional six-month periods, not to exceed a total of two years.
  - (c) The department must evaluate the outdoor preschool provider's ability to follow requirements contained in these standards during the initial license period.
- (4) The department may issue a non-expiring pilot license to a licensee operating under an initial license who demonstrates compliance with the requirements described in these standards during the period of initial licensure. For purposes of this pilot project all licenses, including non-expiring pilot licenses, shall become void at the conclusion of the pilot project unless otherwise extended due to additional legislative action.
- (5) A licensee must submit annual compliance documents at least thirty calendar days prior to the licensee's anniversary date. A licensee's anniversary date occurs each year on the same day and month that is the day and month the first initial license was issued. The required annual compliance documents include the following:
  - (a) A declaration on the department's form indicating:
    - i. The intent to continue operating a licensed outdoor preschool program or the intent to cease operation on a date certain;
    - ii. That the outdoor preschool program is in compliance with all licensing rules;
    - iii. A change in the outdoor preschool program's operational hours or dates; and
    - iv. The intent to comply with all licensing rules.

- (b) Pursuant to RCW 43.216.305(2), documentation of completed background check applications as determined by the department's established schedule; and
  - (c) For each individual required to have a background check clearance, the outdoor preschool provider must verify current background checks or require the individual to submit a background check application at least thirty calendar days prior to the anniversary date.
- (6) If a licensee fails to comply with the requirements for continuing a non-expiring pilot license by their anniversary date, the licensee's current license expires and the outdoor preschool provider must submit a new application for licensure.
- (7) Nothing about the non-expiring pilot license process in this section may interfere with the department's established monitoring practices.
- (8) A licensee has no right to an adjudicative proceeding (hearing) to appeal the expiration, nonrenewal, or non-continuation of a non-expiring pilot license resulting from a failure to comply with the requirements of this section.
- (9) A licensee must have department approval to hold dual licenses (for example: An outdoor preschool pilot license and another care giving license, certification, or similar authorization).
- (10) If the department determines that a licensee is not meeting all applicable requirements and regulations:
  - (a) The department and licensee may agree to modify the pilot license;
  - (b) The licensee may give up one of the licenses, certifications, or authorizations; or
  - (c) The department may suspend, deny, or revoke the outdoor preschool pilot license, pursuant to RCW 43.216.325.
- (11) An outdoor preschool provider must report within twenty-four hours:
  - (a) To the department and local authorities a fire or other structural damage to the early learning program space or other parts of the premises, including a natural disaster affecting an outdoor preschool space;
  - (b) To the department:
    - i. A retirement, termination, death, incapacity, or change of the program director, or program supervisor, or change of ownership or incorporation of a provider;
    - ii. Pursuant to WAC 110-06-0043, when a provider becomes aware of a charge or conviction against themselves, a staff person or, applicable household member,;
    - iii. When a provider becomes aware of an allegation or finding of abuse, neglect, maltreatment, or exploitation of a child or vulnerable adult made against themselves or a staff person,; and
    - iv. Any changes in the outdoor preschool program hours of operation to include closure dates.
- (12) Before increasing the capacity of an outdoor preschool program, the licensee, director, assistant director, or program supervisor must request and be approved to increase the capacity by the department.
- (13) The Licensee, director, assistant director, or program supervisor must have state fire marshal or department approval, and comply with local building ordinances following a significant change under standard 0402 (1)(a) through (1)(c).



- (14) The Licensee, director, assistant director, or program supervisor must notify the department within thirty calendar days when liability insurance coverage under RCW 43.216.700 has lapsed or been terminated.

#### 0435 Waiver from department rules—WAC.

- (1) The department cannot waive a state law (RCW) or federal law requirement.
- (2) Pursuant to RCW 43.216.740, the department may approve a waiver from a rule in these standards or chapter 110-300D WAC if it does not jeopardize the health, safety, or welfare of the children in care.
- (3) An outdoor preschool provider's request for a waiver from a rule in these standards must be:
  - (a) Submitted in writing on the department's form to the local licensing office;
  - (b) Approved in writing by the department director or the director's designee prior to the outdoor preschool provider implementing the waiver from the rule; and
  - (c) For a specific program need or child.
- (4) A granted waiver may be time specific or may remain in effect for as long as the outdoor preschool provider continues to comply with the conditions of the waiver. If the waiver from the rule is time limited, the provider must not exceed the time frame established by the department.
- (5) The department may revoke a granted waiver if a licensing rule which was considered in granting the waiver is materially altered or amended.

#### 0436 Variance from department rules—WAC.

- (1) The department cannot provide a variance from a state or federal law requirement.
- (2) Based upon a written request by an applicant, licensee, director, assistant director, or program supervisor and pursuant to RCW 43.216.740, the department may approve a variance from a rule in these standards or chapter 110-300D WAC if the proposed program alternative does not jeopardize the health, safety, or welfare of the children in care.
- (3) A request for a variance from these standards must be:
  - (a) Submitted in writing on the department's form to the local licensing office;
  - (b) Approved in writing by the department director or the director's designee prior to the outdoor preschool provider implementing the variance from the rule; and
  - (c) For a specific program approach or methodology.
- (4) A granted variance may be time specific or may remain in effect for as long as the outdoor preschool provider continues to comply with the conditions of the variance. If the variance from the rule is time limited, the provider must not exceed the time frame established by the department.
- (5) The department may revoke a granted variance if a licensing rule which was considered in granting the variance is materially altered or amended.

#### 0440 Facility licensing compliance agreements, non-referral status, probationary license, and provider rights.

- (1) At the department's discretion, when an outdoor preschool provider is in violation of these standards or chapter 43.216 RCW, a facility licensing compliance agreement (FLCA) may be issued in lieu of the department taking enforcement action. The FLCA must contain:

- (a) A description of the violation and the law or rule that was violated.
  - (b) A proposed plan from the provider or a designee to comply with the law or rule.
  - (c) The date the violation must be corrected that is determined by:
    - i. The seriousness of the violation;
    - ii. The potential threat to the health, safety, and well-being to the children in care; and
    - iii. The number of times the outdoor preschool program has violated the requirements described in these standards, or failed to comply with the requirements described in chapter 43.216 RCW or chapter 110-300D WAC.
  - (d) Information describing other licensing action that may be imposed if compliance does not occur by the required date.
  - (e) The signature of the department licenser and the licensee.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must return a copy of the completed FLCA to the department after corrective action has been completed and by the date indicated.
  - (3) Pursuant to RCW 43.216.395, an outdoor preschool provider may request an internal review process to review a department licensing decision.
  - (4) In an enforcement action against an outdoor preschool program or provider, the provider has the right to:
    - (a) Refuse to accept or sign a FLCA.
    - (b) Refuse to agree to a probationary license.
  - (5) If an outdoor preschool provider refuses a FLCA or probationary license, this may result in any of the following enforcement actions:
    - (a) Modification of the license;
    - (b) Non-continuation of a non-expiring pilot license;
    - (c) Suspension of the license; or
    - (d) Revocation of the license.
  - (6) Pursuant to RCW 43.216.325(4), in addition to or in lieu of an enforcement action being taken, the department may place an outdoor preschool provider on non-referral status.
  - (7) A probationary license may be issued to an outdoor preschool provider or program operating under a non-expiring pilot license as part of a corrective action plan. Pursuant to RCW 43.216.320(2), before issuing a probationary license the department must refer the program or provider to the childcare resource and referral network or other appropriate resource for technical assistance.
  - (8) A department decision to issue a probationary license is based on an outdoor preschool program or provider's:
    - (a) Negligent or intentional noncompliance with the licensing rules;
    - (b) History of noncompliance with licensing rules;
    - (c) Current noncompliance with licensing rules;
    - (d) Fire safety inspection or health and sanitation inspection report that failed to gain approval;
    - (e) Use of unauthorized space for child care;
    - (f) Inadequate supervision of children;
    - (g) Understaffing for the number of children in care;
    - (h) Noncompliance with requirements addressing children's health, proper nutrition, discipline, emergency medical plan, sanitation or personal hygiene practices; and

- (i) Any other factors relevant to the specific situation and consistent with the intent or purpose of these standards, chapter 43.216 RCW, and chapter 110-300D WAC.
- (9) When the department issues a probationary license, the outdoor preschool provider must:
  - (a) Provide notice of the probationary license and a copy of the department's probationary licensing agreement to the parents or guardians of enrolled children within five business days of receiving the probationary license;
  - (b) Provide documentation to the department that parents or guardians of enrolled children have been notified within ten business days of receiving the probationary license;
  - (c) Inform new parents or guardians of the probationary status before enrolling new children into care;
  - (d) Return the outdoor preschool program's non-expiring pilot license to the department; and
  - (e) Post documentation of the approved written probationary license consistent with the requirements for child daycare centers and family daycare providers as described in RCW 43.216.687.
- (10) Consistent with the requirements for child daycare centers and family daycare providers under RCW 43.216.689, an outdoor preschool provider must have inspection reports and notices of enforcement actions for the past three years readily available for review by the department, parents, and the public.

#### 0443 Enforcement actions, notice, and appeal.

- (1) Pursuant to RCW 43.216.325, the department is authorized to take enforcement actions when an outdoor preschool provider fails to comply with chapter 43.216 RCW or chapter 110-300D WAC. Enforcement actions are also authorized under RCW 43.216.020, 43.216.065, and 43.216.250.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider subject to an enforcement action has the right to appeal by requesting an adjudicative proceeding (or "hearing") pursuant to chapter 110-03 WAC, DCYF hearing rules.
- (3) The department must issue a notice of violation to an outdoor preschool provider when taking enforcement actions. A notice of violation must be sent by certified mail or personal service and must include:
  - (a) The reason why the department is taking the action;
  - (b) The rules the provider failed to comply with;
  - (c) The provider's right to appeal enforcement actions; and
  - (d) How the provider may appeal and request a hearing.

## Records, Policies, Reporting, and Posting

#### 0450 Parent or guardian handbook and related policies.

- (1) An early learning provider must supply to each parent or guardian written policies regarding the outdoor preschool program. Each enrolled child's record must have signed documentation stating the parent or guardian reviewed the handbook and outdoor preschool program policies.

- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must have and follow formal written policies in either paper or electronic format, including:
- (a) A nondiscrimination statement;
  - (b) A family engagement and partnership communication plan;
  - (c) A parent or guardian's permission for photography, videotaping, or surveillance of his or her child;
  - (d) Alcohol, tobacco, cannabis use and prohibition of illegal drugs;
  - (e) Curriculum philosophy on how children learn and develop, and how this philosophy is implemented;
  - (f) Child guidance plan, which includes restraint policies and forbidding corporal punishment;
  - (g) Expulsion policy;
  - (h) Outdoor preschool program staff-to-child ratios and classroom types offered;
  - (i) If the outdoor preschool program offers any of the following, they must include a policy for each that applies to their program:
    - i. Care for children with specific or special needs;
    - ii. Dual language learning;
    - iii. Religious and cultural activities, including how holidays will be celebrated;
    - iv. Transportation and off-site field trips;
    - v. Water activities;
    - vi. Campfire activities;
    - vii. Outdoor preschool risk management policies and waiver(s) pursuant to standard 0471; and
    - viii. How weapons on the premises are secured, if applicable.
  - (j) Program days and hours of operation, including closure dates and observed holidays;
  - (k) Enrollment and disenrollment requirements;
  - (l) Fees and payment plans;
  - (m) Sign-in and sign-out requirements;
  - (n) Information required for the child's record, including:
    - i. The importance and plan for keeping the information current;
    - ii. A plan to keep the child's information confidential; and
    - iii. Who may legally access the child's information.
  - (o) A kindergarten transition plan, if applicable;
  - (p) What parents or guardians must supply for their child (for example: Extra clothing or diapers);
  - (q) Permission for a parent or guardian's access to areas of the outdoor preschool program during business hours;
  - (r) Termination of services policy;
  - (s) Emergency preparedness plan;
  - (t) The outdoor preschool provider and program staff's duty to report incidents including reporting suspected child abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, or maltreatment;
  - (u) Policies regarding mixed age groups, if applicable (including when children may be in a mixed age group);
  - (v) Description of where the parent or guardian may find and review the outdoor preschool program's:
    - i. Health policy;
    - ii. Staff policies, if applicable;

- iii. Consistent care policy;
  - iv. Menus;
  - v. Liability insurance;
  - vi. Inspection reports and notices of enforcement actions, if applicable; and
  - vii. Other relevant program policies.
- (w) Pursuant to standard 0198, any food preparation practices done by staff at their private residence.
  - (x) Pursuant to standard 0245, any laundering practices done by staff or families at their private residence.
  - (y) Pursuant to standard 0505, policies for postings for outdoor preschools without an appropriate facility for posting.

#### 0455 Attendance records.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider may keep a child in care up to a maximum of ten hours each day. If needed, the maximum time may be extended based upon the parent or guardian's work, an agreed upon alternate schedule, or travel to and from the outdoor preschool program.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must keep daily child attendance records, either in paper or electronic format for each child (including the children of staff in the program). These records must be easily accessible and kept on-site or in the program's administrative office for department review. These records must clearly document:
  - (a) The name of the child;
  - (b) The date of care;
  - (c) Child arrival and departure times from the outdoor preschool program;
  - (d) Signature or electronic signature of parent, guardian or other authorized person at the time of arrival and departure; and
  - (e) A staff signature when a child leaves the outdoor preschool program to attend school or participate in off-site activities not offered by the outdoor preschool program.
- (3) An outdoor preschool provider must keep daily staff attendance records for each class of children. These attendance records must be on paper or in an electronic format and clearly document:
  - (a) The name of each staff member (including staff assigned to care for children with special needs and one-on-one care) and volunteers;
  - (b) The number of children in each outdoor preschool class;
  - (c) The staff-to-child ratio;
  - (d) The date; and
  - (e) Start and end times of the assigned staff or volunteers.
- (4) If the attendance records are kept electronically, the electronic system must:
  - (a) Record either an electronic signature, swipecard, personal identification number (PIN), biometric reader, or similar action by the parent or authorized person when signing the child in or out of care (or staff notation of who picked up or dropped off along with time in and out if authorized person does not have electronic signature, swipe card, PIN, biometric reader or similar action);
  - (b) Ensure the authenticity, confidentiality, integrity, security, accessibility, and protection against disproof of the electronic records;
  - (c) Be able to produce an authentic, verifiable and uniquely identified written record for each transaction;



- (d) Be able to authenticate (prove the identity of) the sender of the record and ensure that the electronic record has not been altered;
  - (e) Be able to capture an electronic record for each transaction conducted;
  - (f) Be able to retain the electronic record in an accessible form for their legal minimum retention period;
  - (g) Be able to search and retrieve electronic records in the normal course of business; and
  - (h) Be able to perform in an accurate, reliable, and consistent manner in the normal course of business.
- (5) Electronic attendance records must contain information necessary to reproduce the entire electronic record and associated signatures in a form that permits a person viewing or printing the entire electronic record to verify:
- (a) The contents of the electronic record;
  - (b) The person signing the electronic record; and
  - (c) The date signatures were executed.

#### 0460 Child records.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must keep current individualized enrollment and health records for all enrolled children, including children of staff, updated annually or more often as health records are updated.
  - (a) A child's record must be kept in a confidential manner but in an area easily accessible to staff.
  - (b) A child's parent or guardian must be allowed access to all of his or her own child's records.
- (2) Each child's enrollment record must include the following:
  - (a) The child's birth date;
  - (b) An enrolled child's parent or phone numbers, address, and contact information for reaching the family while the child is in care;
  - (c) Emergency contact information. If no emergency contact is available, a written and signed emergency contact plan may be accepted;
  - (d) Names and phone numbers of persons authorized to pick up enrolled children;
  - (e) Pursuant to standard 0300 a plan for special or individual needs of the child, if applicable, including parent or guardian signatures;
  - (f) Signed parent or guardian permissions and waivers as applicable, for the following activities:
    - i. Field trips;
    - ii. Transportation;
    - iii. Bathing;
    - iv. Water activities including swimming pools or other bodies of water;
    - v. Pursuant to standard 0351, campfire activities;
    - vi. Pursuant to standard 0471, applicable outdoor preschool risk management policies and waivers; and
    - vii. Photo, video, or surveillance activity.
  - (g) The beginning and end enrollment date for children no longer in the outdoor preschool program's care;
  - (h) A parent or guardian approved plan for use of physical restraint and documentation of parental or guardian notification;
  - (i) Expulsion information, documentation, and steps taken to avoid expulsion;

- (j) Termination of services documentation and communication; and
  - (k) Notification of child developmental screening information given to the child's parent or guardian, if applicable.
- (3) Each child's health record and the information described in subsection (2)(a) through (k) of this section must be available to staff for medical administration or emergencies.
- (4) A health record is required for every enrolled child that is counted in an outdoor preschool program's capacity. A health record must include:
- (a) Pursuant to standard 0210(1), an immunization record;
  - (b) The child's health history including any known health conditions and the child's individual care plan, if applicable;
  - (c) Pursuant to standard 0215, if applicable a medication authorization and administration log,;
  - (d) If applicable, documentation of special medical procedure training by parent or guardian;
  - (e) Medical and dental care provider names and contact information or what facility the parent or guardian would prefer for treatment;
  - (f) Dates of the child's last physical exam and dental exam, if available;
  - (g) Consent to seek medical care and treatment of the child in the event of injury or illness, signed by the child's parent or guardian;
  - (h) Signed parent or guardian permission for visiting health professionals who provide direct services to children at the outdoor preschool program;
  - (i) An incident or injury report that includes:
    - i. The date and description of the child's incident or injury;
    - ii. Treatment provided to the child while in care;
    - iii. The names of the outdoor preschool program staff providing the treatment; and
    - iv. Evidence that a copy of the incident or injury report was given to the child's parent or guardian.
  - (j) Documentation that a provider reported food poisoning or contagious diseases to the local health jurisdiction or the department of health, if applicable.

#### 0465 Retaining facility and program records.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must keep the records required in these standards for a minimum of three years unless otherwise indicated by state or federal law.
- (2) Attendance records must be kept for a minimum of five years.
- (3) Facility and program records from the previous twelve months must be easily accessible and kept on-site or in the program's administrative office for department or other state agency review.
- (4) Records older than twelve months must be provided to the department or other state agency within two weeks of the delivery of a written request by the department or other state agency.
- (5) An outdoor preschool provider must keep the following records available for department review:
  - (a) The parent or guardian handbook;
  - (b) Furniture, sleep, and play equipment forms and specifications, if applicable;
  - (c) Chromated copper arsenate test results, if applicable;
  - (d) Annual fire inspection by qualified fire professional, if applicable;
  - (e) Annual inspection of chimney, wood stove, or fireplace, if applicable;

- (f) Monthly inspection to identify fire hazards and elimination of such hazards;
- (g) Monthly testing of smoke and carbon monoxide detectors;
- (h) Monthly fire extinguisher inspection and annual maintenance;
- (i) Food temperature logs pursuant to CACFP, if applicable;
- (j) Child incident and illness logs;
- (k) Vaccination records for pets or animals housed at the early learning program, if applicable;
- (l) Lead and copper testing results;
- (m) Private well and septic systems inspection and testing results, if applicable;
- (n) Cleaning log for large area rugs or carpets, if applicable;
- (o) Pesticide use (seven years);
- (p) Car insurance policy, if applicable;
- (q) Monthly site visits from a child care health consultant, if applicable;
- (r) Tacoma smelter inspection results, if applicable;
- (s) Curriculum planning schedule;
- (t) Strengthening Families Program Self-Assessment or an equivalent assessment;
- (u) Documents from department visits (inspections, monitoring, compliance agreements, and safety plans);
- (v) Land use agreements for outdoor preschools;
- (w) Insurance policies, for outdoor preschools;
- (x) Land maintenance records, such as arborist records, for outdoor preschools operating on private land; and
- (y) Waivers or variances from department rules, if applicable.

#### 0470 Emergency preparedness plan.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must have and follow a written emergency preparedness plan. The plan must be reviewed and approved by the department prior to when changes are made and prior to being licensed as an outdoor preschool. Emergency preparedness plans must:
  - (a) Be designed to respond to fire, natural disasters, and other emergencies that might affect the outdoor preschool program;
  - (b) Be specific to the outdoor preschool program and able to be implemented during hours of operation;
  - (c) Address what the provider would do if he or she has an emergency and children may be left unsupervised;
  - (d) Address what the outdoor preschool program must do if parents are not able to get to their children for up to three days;
  - (e) Follow the requirements contained in chapter 212-12 WAC (Fire marshal standards) as now or hereafter amended and the state fire marshal's office requirements of an outdoor preschool program;
  - (f) Be reviewed at program orientation, annually with all outdoor preschool program staff with documented signatures, and when the plan is updated; and
  - (g) Be reviewed with parents or guardians when a child is enrolled and when the plan is updated.
  - (h) Be made for all locations utilized by an outdoor preschool if the outdoor preschool is licensed to operate in those locations.
- (2) The written emergency preparedness plan must cover at a minimum:
  - (a) Disaster plans, including fires that may require evacuation:

- i. An evacuation floor plan that identifies room numbers or names of rooms, emergency exit pathways, emergency exit doors, and for family home based programs, emergency exit windows if applicable;
  - ii. Methods to be used for sounding an alarm and calling 911;
  - iii. Actions to be taken by a person discovering an emergency;
  - iv. How the outdoor preschool provider will evacuate children, especially those who cannot walk independently. This may include children with disabilities, functional needs requirements, or other special needs;
  - v. Where the alternate evacuation location is;
  - vi. What to take when evacuating children, including:
    - (A) First-aid kit(s);
    - (B) Copies of emergency contact information;
    - (C) Child medication records; and
    - (D) Individual children's medication, if applicable.
  - vii. How the provider will maintain the required staff-to-child ratio and account for all children;
  - viii. How parents or guardians will be able to contact the outdoor preschool program; and
  - ix. How children will be reunited with their parents or guardians after the event.
- (b) Earthquake procedures including:
  - i. What a provider will do during an earthquake;
  - ii. How a provider will account for all children; and
  - iii. How a provider will coordinate with local or state officials to determine if the licensed space is safe for children after an earthquake.
- (c) Public safety related lockdown scenarios when an individual at or near an outdoor preschool program is harming or attempting to harm others with or without a weapon. This plan must include lockdown of the outdoor preschool program or shelter-in-place including:
  - i. How doors and windows will be secured to prevent access, if needed; and
  - ii. Where children will safely stay inside the early learning program, or inside an alternate evacuation location for outdoor preschools without a suitable structure in the licensed area.
- (d) Extreme Weather procedures including but not limited to a description of the following:
  - i. How staff will determine whether to cancel or alter the scheduled daily program based on weather, including but not limited to:
    - (A) High winds;
    - (B) Pursuant to standard 0147, extreme cold or heat;
    - (C) Air quality;
    - (D) Lightning storm;
    - (E) Tornado;
    - (F) Hurricane, or
    - (G) As applicable, flooding, tsunamis, or seiche.
  - ii. How staff will inform parents/guardians of cancelled or altered daily programs.
  - iii. How staff will determine a need to use the emergency shelter.
  - iv. How staff will contact families if extreme weather requires a cancellation of the program after the day has already begun.

- v. How and where staff will care for children whose parents cannot be contacted.
  - vi. The factors that will be used for determining how long staff will remain at the emergency shelter with children before relocating to an alternate evacuation location;
  - vii. How staff and children will relocate to an alternate evacuation location, including how parents will be notified of the evacuation;
  - viii. How the provider will maintain the required staff-to-child ratio and account for all children; and
  - ix. How children will be reunited with their parents or guardians after the event.
- (e) A description for how parents or guardians will be contacted after the emergency ends.
- (3) An outdoor preschool provider must keep on the premises a three day supply of food, water, and life-sustaining medication for the licensed capacity of children and current staff for use in case of an emergency. Outdoor preschools must ensure these resources are available at the alternate evacuation location.
- (4) An outdoor preschool provider must practice and record emergency drills with staff and children as follows:
  - (a) Fire and evacuation drill once each calendar month;
  - (b) Earthquake, lockdown, or shelter-in-place drill once every three calendar months;
  - (c) Emergency drills must be conducted with a variety of staff and at different times of the day; and
  - (d) Drills must be recorded on a department form and include:
    - i. The date and time of the drill;
    - ii. The number of children and staff who participated;
    - iii. The length of the drill; and
    - iv. Notes about how the drill went and how it may be improved.
- (5) In areas where local emergency plans are already in place, such as school districts, an outdoor preschool program may adopt or amend such procedures when developing their own plan.

#### 0471 Outdoor Preschool Benefit-Risk Assessments, Risk Management Policies and Waivers

- (1) Outdoor preschool providers must have and implement benefit-risk assessments and risk management plans. These assessments and plans must be available for department review at the time of initial licensing. An amended assessment or plan cannot be implemented until the department has approved it. Benefit-risk assessments must be developed under the following circumstances.
  - (a) The selection of a site for an outdoor preschool program that will be used by the program on a regular basis.
  - (b) For the different seasons of the year (for example, a summer plan versus winter plan), or as conditions change within sites that are used on a regular basis by the program.
  - (c) For risky play activities including, but not limited to the following:
    - i. Climbing without shock-absorbing ground cover;



- ii. Using sharp tools;
  - iii. Campfire activities; and
  - iv. Activities near water, cliffs, steep slopes, or other potentially hazardous natural features.
- (d) To provide guidance for when increased staffing is necessary, and provide guidance for the development of the applicable risk management policies and procedures described in subsection (2) of this section.
- (2) Outdoor preschools must have risk management policies and procedures to address potential hazards and risks of their nature-based program. These must include, but are not limited to policies or procedures related to the following:
  - (a) Encountering pets and wildlife pursuant to standard 0225;
  - (b) Interacting with strangers, limiting unsupervised access to any child in care, pursuant to standard 0345;
  - (c) The shared use of public space;
  - (d) Campfire activities pursuant to standard 0351;
  - (e) Water activities or activities near bodies of water more than 4 inches deep, pursuant to standard 0350;
  - (f) Weather requiring the use of an emergency shelter;
  - (g) Required clothing and keeping children dressed for the weather pursuant to standard 0147;
  - (h) Using any public facilities or buildings,
  - (i) Climbing natural features;
  - (j) Foraging or Egg Collection and Consumption pursuant to standard 0196;
  - (k) Encountering poisonous species;
  - (l) Use of sharp tools;
  - (m) Missing child protocols pursuant to standard 0475. Missing child protocols for outdoor preschools must also include how staff will:
    - i. Immediately check for the child's presence at hazardous features, such as a ravine, cliff, road, or body of water, within a quarter mile of the program, and
    - ii. Manage the behavior of the remaining children, and using techniques described in 0310 (4).
  - (n) Toileting in the outdoor preschool space;
  - (o) Hand-washing in the outdoors; and
  - (p) All other risky play activities as described in subsection (1) (c) of this section.
- (3) Parents or guardians must sign an outdoor preschool risk waiver that acknowledges and accepts the potential hazards and risks associated with the outdoor preschool program. The program's applicable risk management policies or procedures, as described in subsection (2) of this section, along with the parent waiver, must be included in the parent handbook, pursuant to standard 0450.
- (4) A copy of the waiver signed by the child's parent or guardian must be kept in each child's records.
- (5) Outdoor preschool staff must be trained on the applicable outdoor preschool benefit-risk assessments, and risk management policies and risk procedures pursuant to standard 0110.
- (6) Staff must consider the daily health and safety needs of children and staff, and may determine that more restrictive risk management practices are necessary to address an unforeseen increased risk. Such infrequent and immediate changes to risk management plans are not required to be approved by the department or presented to parents in the parent and guardian handbook.

#### 0475 Duty to protect children and report incidents.

- (1) Pursuant to RCW 26.44.030, when an outdoor preschool provider has reasonable cause to believe a child has suffered abuse or neglect, that provider must report such incident, or cause a report to be made, to the proper law enforcement agency or the department.
- (2) An outdoor preschool provider must report as follows to the appropriate entity upon obtaining knowledge of the information described in subsections (2)(a) through (2)(e) of this section.
  - (a) Immediately report to law enforcement and, unless otherwise stated in this section, report to the department within forty-eight hours:
    - i. The death of a child while in the outdoor preschool program's care or the death from injury or illness that may have occurred while the child was in care;
    - ii. A child's attempted suicide or talk about attempting suicide;
    - iii. Any suspected physical, sexual or emotional child abuse;
    - iv. Any suspected child neglect, child endangerment, or child exploitation;
    - v. A child's disclosure of sexual or physical abuse; or
    - vi. Inappropriate sexual contact between two or more children.
  - (b) Emergency services (911) immediately, and to the department within twenty-four hours:
    - i. A child missing from care, triggered as soon as staff realizes the child is missing;
    - ii. A medical emergency that requires immediate professional medical care;
    - iii. A child who is given too much of any oral, inhaled, or injected medication;
    - iv. A child who took or received another child's medication;
    - v. A fire or other emergency;
    - vi. Poisoning or suspected poisoning; or
    - vii. Other dangers or incidents requiring emergency response.
  - (c) Washington poison center immediately after calling 911, and to the department within twenty-four hours:
    - i. A poisoning or suspected poisoning;
    - ii. A child who is given too much of any oral, inhaled, or injected medication; or
    - iii. A child who took or received another child's medication;
    - iv. The provider must follow any directions provided by Washington poison center.
  - (d) The local health jurisdiction or the department of health immediately, and to the department within twenty-four hours about an occurrence of food poisoning or reportable contagious disease as defined in chapter 246-110 WAC;
  - (e) To the department at the first opportunity but in no case no longer than twenty-four hours upon receiving knowledge or information of any change in a person's background that is caused by any of the following circumstances:
    - i. A pending charge or conviction for a crime listed in chapter 110-06 WAC;
    - ii. An allegation or finding of child abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation under chapter 26.44 RCW or chapter 388-15 WAC;
    - iii. An allegation or finding of abuse or neglect of a vulnerable adult under chapter 74.34 RCW; or

- iv. A pending charge or conviction of a crime listed in the director's list in chapter 110-06 WAC from outside Washington state, or a "negative action" as defined in RCW 43.216.010.
- (3) In addition to reporting to the department by phone or email, an outdoor preschool provider must submit a written incident report of the following on a department form within twenty-four hours after the first report to the department:
  - (a) Situations that required an emergency response from emergency services (911), Washington poison center, or department of health;
  - (b) Situations that occur while children are in care that may put children at risk including, but not limited to, inappropriate sexual touching, neglect, physical abuse, maltreatment, or exploitation; and
  - (c) A serious injury to a child in care.
- (4) An outdoor preschool provider must immediately report to the parent or guardian:
  - (a) Their child's death, serious injury, need for emergency or poison services; or
  - (b) An incident involving their child that was reported to the local health jurisdiction or the department of health.

#### 0480 Transportation and off-site activity policy.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must have and follow a transportation and off-site activity policy for personal or public transportation service, or nonmotorized travel offered to children in care.
  - (a) The transportation and off-site activity policy must include routine trips, which must not exceed two hours per day for any individual child.
  - (b) Written parent or guardian authorization to transport the parent or guardian's child. The written authorization must be:
    - i. For a specific event, date, and anticipated travel time;
    - ii. For a specific type of trip (for example, transporting to and from school, or transporting to and from a field trip); or
    - iii. For a full range of trips a child may take while in the outdoor preschool provider's care; and
    - iv. For purposes of outdoor preschool emergency preparedness, emergency trip(s) to an alternative evacuation location.
  - (c) Written notices to parents or guardians, to be given at least twenty-four hours before field trips are taken.
- (2) During travel to an off-site activity, an outdoor preschool provider must:
  - (a) Have the health history, appropriate medication (if applicable), emergency information, and emergency medical authorization forms accessible for each child being transported;
  - (b) Have a phone to call for emergency help;
  - (c) Have a complete first-aid kit;
  - (d) Maintain the staff-to-child ratio, mixed groupings, and active supervision requirements;
  - (e) Have at least one staff member currently certified in first aid and CPR supervise children;
  - (f) Take attendance using a roll call or other method that ensures all children are accounted for each time children begin and end travel to an off-site activity, and every time children enter and exit a vehicle; and
  - (g) Never leave children unattended in the vehicle.

- (3) When an outdoor preschool provider supplies the vehicle to transport children in care, the program and provider must:
  - (a) Follow chapter 46.61 RCW (Rules of the Road) and other applicable laws regarding child restraints and car seats;
  - (b) Ensure that the number of passengers does not exceed the seating capacity of the vehicle;
  - (c) Maintain the vehicle in good repair and safe operating condition;
  - (d) Maintain the vehicle temperature at a comfortable level to children;
  - (e) Ensure the vehicle has a current license and registration as required by Washington state transportation laws;
  - (f) Ensure the vehicle has emergency reflective triangles or other devices to alert other drivers of an emergency;
  - (g) Ensure the driver has a valid driver's license for the type of vehicle being driven and a safe driving record for at least the last five years;
- (4) Prevent any driver with a known condition that would compromise driving, supervision, or evacuation capabilities from operating program vehicles; and
- (5) Have a current insurance policy that covers the driver, the vehicle, and all occupants.

#### 0485 Termination of services policy.

An outdoor preschool provider may terminate a child's services due to that child's parent or guardian's inability to meet the expectations and requirements of the outdoor preschool program. Expectations and requirements of the program may include unpaid bills, continual late arrivals, or a parent, guardian or family member's inappropriate or unsafe behavior in or near outdoor preschool program space.

#### 0486 Expulsion policy.

- (1) Pursuant to standard 0340, an outdoor preschool provider must have and follow an expulsion policy.
- (2) The expulsion policy must:
  - (a) Provide examples of behavior that could lead to expulsion from the outdoor preschool program;
  - (b) Detail the steps the provider must take to avoid expelling a child including, but not limited to, environmental and staffing changes;
  - (c) Detail how the provider communicates to the parent or guardian of a child the steps taken under subsection (b) of this section; and
  - (d) Include information that may benefit an expelled child including, but not limited to, community based resources.

#### 0490 Child restraint policy.

- (1) Pursuant to standard 0335, an outdoor preschool provider must have and follow a child restraint policy that contains behavior management and practices.
- (2) A restraint policy must be:
  - (a) Appropriate for children's developmental level, abilities, and language skills;
  - (b) Directly related to the child's behavior; and
  - (c) Designed to be consistent, fair, and positive.
- (3) The outdoor preschool provider, family home licensees, center directors, assistant directors, program supervisors, lead teachers and other appropriate staff members must be trained annually in the program's child restraint policy.

- (4) Pursuant to standard 0335, only trained staff may restrain a child in care.

#### 0495 Consistent care policy.

- (1) An outdoor preschool program must have and follow a policy that promotes the consistent care of children.
- (2) When possible, an outdoor preschool provider must be assigned to work with a consistent group of children for much of the day with a goal of building long-term, trusting relationships.

#### 0500 Health policy.

- (1) An outdoor preschool provider must have and follow a written health policy reviewed and approved by the department that includes the topics listed in subsection (2) of this section. The health policy must be reviewed and approved by the department when changes are made, and as otherwise necessary.
- (2) An outdoor preschool program's health policy must comply with the requirements described in these standards including, but not limited to:
  - (a) A plan for the prevention of exposure to blood and body fluids;
  - (b) A plan for meals, snacks, and food services including guidelines for food allergies and food brought from home;
  - (c) Handwashing and hand sanitizer use;
  - (d) Observing children for signs of illness daily;
  - (e) Exclusion and return of ill children, staff, or any other person in the program space;
  - (f) Contagious disease notification;
  - (g) Medical emergencies, injury treatment and reporting;
  - (h) Immunization tracking;
  - (i) Medication management, storage, administration and documentation;
  - (j) Care for pets and animals that have access to licensed space, how children may engage with pets and animals, and the health risks of interacting with pets and animals;
  - (k) How general cleaning will be provided and how areas such as food contact surfaces, kitchen equipment, toys, toileting equipment, and laundry will be cleaned, sanitized and disinfected;
  - (l) Pest control policies;
  - (m) Caring for children with special needs or health needs, including allergies, as listed in the child's record; and
  - (n) Dental hygiene practices and education.

#### 0505 Postings.

- (1) Postings listed in subsection (2) of this section that are part of an outdoor preschool program must be clearly visible to parents, guardians, and outdoor preschool program staff, whenever possible. Outdoor preschools without the ability to post the following must, in lieu of posting:
  - (a) Have available on-site and easily accessible for parent or guardian review the same information as described in subsections (2)(a), (2)(b), (2)(d), (2)(f), (2)(k), and (2)(l) of this section.



- (b) Deliver notice to the parents and guardians of the events described in subsections (2)(i), (2)(l), and (2)(m) of this section within twenty-four hours of the occurrence of such event or events.
  - (c) Have available on-site and easily accessible to staff the information contained in subsections (2)(a), (2)(b), (2)(c), (2)(e), (2)(f), (2)(g), (2)(h), (2)(i), (2)(j), and (2)(m) of this section.
- (2) Postings on outdoor preschool premises must include, whenever possible:
- (a) Pursuant to standard 0010, the child care license;
  - (b) Pursuant to standard 0400(1)(b)(i) and (1)(b)(ii), and standard 0470(2)(a)(i), Outdoor preschool site map, with emergency routes and exits identified in each child care area;
  - (c) Pursuant to standard 0186(1), dietary restrictions, known allergies, and nutrition requirements, if applicable, in a location easily accessible for staff but not available to those who are not parents or guardians of the enrolled child;
  - (d) Pursuant to standard 0200 handwashing practices at each handwashing sink;
  - (e) Pursuant to standard 0220 and 0221(1)(d), if applicable, diaper changing or stand-up diapering procedure at each diapering station;
  - (f) If applicable, pesticide treatment notices pursuant to RCW 43.216.280 and RCW 17.21.410 (1)(d);
  - (g) Emergency numbers and information including, but not limited to:
    - i. 911 or emergency services number;
    - ii. Name, address and directions from the nearest arterial street or nearest cross street to the facility;
    - iii. The department's toll-free number;
    - iv. Washington poison center toll-free number; and
    - v. The contact information for child protective services.
  - (h) The location of emergency medical information for children and staff;
  - (i) Consistent with the requirements for child daycare centers and family daycare providers as described in RCW 43.216.687, a notice of any current or pending enforcement action, including probationary licenses. Notice must be posted:
    - i. Immediately upon receipt; and
    - ii. For at least two weeks or until the violation causing the enforcement action is corrected, whichever is longer.
  - (j) Pursuant to standard 0420(2)(f), "No smoking" and "no vaping" signs;
  - (k) If applicable, a copy of a department approved waiver or variance from a rule or these standards. Waivers or variances must be posted for parent or guardian view when related to the overall program (not related to any specific child), and as long as the waiver or variance is approved;
  - (l) Insurance coverage, or if applicable a lapse or termination of such coverage pursuant to RCW 43.216.700; and
  - (m) Any other information listed or described in RCW 43.216.687.



# Nurturing Early Learning

Resources to Support Young Children's  
Learning in the Outdoors





JULY 2018  
Research Briefs

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# Why outdoor play?

Research reveals the importance of nature contact and outdoor play in supporting children’s healthy physical, social and emotional, psychological, and cognitive development. However, sociopolitical and cultural factors are threatening children’s access to nature experiences. Incorporating meaningful nature interactions into early childhood care and education settings is a powerful way to enrich children’s learning and development.

A growing body of literature describes the many potent benefits of nature play. Outdoor play is associated with elevated activity levels that protect against physical health problems.<sup>1</sup> Nature contact supports psychological health, improves attention and focus, mitigates stress, and reduces risk of depression and anxiety disorders.<sup>2</sup> Spending time outdoors strengthens children’s immune systems and play involving natural features such as uneven terrain and balancing logs facilitates gross and fine motor development.<sup>3</sup> Nature encourages children to engage in free play shaped by their own curiosity, and the play is highly physical and tactile, collaborative, and imaginative. In addition, when children learn to embrace the changes and challenges of the natural world, they

develop resilience, self-regulation, and the ability to assess and manage risks.<sup>4</sup> Nature experiences lay the foundation for children to thrive as learners, lovers of nature, and human beings.

Despite the recognized importance of nature experiences, children’s access to outdoor play is drastically curtailed compared with previous generations.<sup>5</sup> Children in the U.S. exhibit a similar trend as adults in adopting a highly sedentary lifestyle. At the same time and almost certainly relatedly, there has been a sharp increase in health problems among children, including obesity and associated diseases, vitamin D deficiency, and mental health disorders.<sup>6</sup> This dwindling opportunity for nature

**“We need to give [children] time outdoors, where they can meet and savor the world that humans have not made – pill bugs on a sidewalk, a swarm of tadpoles in a puddle, a tree for climbing, a sky aflame with sunset, a kiss of wind.”**

**Scott Russell Sanders**  
“A Conservationist’s Manifesto”

play results from a variety of social and political causes. High-stakes testing and accountability policies in education lead to the elimination of unstructured outdoor play time from classroom schedules in order to maximize academic learning.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the practice of intensive parenting leaves even the youngest children with scarce free time.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, schools’ and residential communities’ fears of injury-related litigation also lead to restrictions on outdoor play.<sup>9</sup> Parents’ perceptions of heightened social and physical danger drive them to keep their children “safely” indoors.<sup>10</sup> The pervasive presence of digital devices also detracts from children’s motivation to spend time in outdoor play.<sup>11</sup> These shifting priorities and culture of risk aversion impede healthy development and harm children in the long run.

Fortunately, the growing understanding of the importance of nature interactions in child development and the concurrent diminishment of children’s access to nature play have inspired families, educators, researchers, pediatricians, and non-profit organizations to advocate for reconnecting children with nature. The number of early childhood education programs that are centered around nature-based play and learning has rapidly increased in recent years. As of 2017, there are at least 250 nature preschools and forest kindergartens in the United States.<sup>12</sup> Washington State has begun a four-year pilot to determine licensing standards for outdoor, nature-based early learning programs. Washington State also offers state-based professional development opportunities such as the 2018 Early Achievers conference on the science behind children’s play and learning in the outdoors.

## Reflection Questions

**To what extent do children in your program spend time outdoors? How can you increase children’s opportunities for outdoor play and improve the quality of these play experiences?**

**While imagining possibilities for supporting nature contact, how can you embrace each child’s personality and interests, family and home backgrounds, and cultural communities? How can nature contact include both bringing children into nature and bringing nature into indoor classroom spaces?**



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# Health and developmental outcomes of nature play

The natural world affords diverse play opportunities that support children's physical, cognitive, and social-emotional health and development.<sup>1</sup> To prevent the serious health challenges associated with young children's sedentary, overscheduled, and restricted lifestyles, educators should work to incorporate active and unstructured nature play into early childhood education programs.

Children's play in outdoor settings is more vigorous, varied, and sustained than indoor play.<sup>2,3</sup> The prevalence of childhood obesity has greatly increased, and research indicates that unstructured active play is a powerful protective factor for young children.<sup>4,5</sup> Natural features such as uneven terrain and inclines support gross and fine motor development, including muscle and bone health, balance, coordination, endurance, spatial awareness, core strength, and postural control.<sup>6,7,8</sup> The natural world also offers rich and diverse stimuli that facilitate children's development of sensory capacities and sensory integration. According to the hygiene hypothesis, nature play also strengthens children's immune systems by exposing them to microorganisms and infectious agents in the early years of development.<sup>9,10</sup> In addition to these developmental benefits, activity levels in childhood are predictive of lifelong engagement in physical activity.

The diverse affordances of natural play settings contribute to the development of a wide range of cognitive abilities. Active play has been linked with self-regulation skills,

especially via neural associations between motor and cognitive development.<sup>11,12,13</sup> Natural settings contain an abundance of loose parts and open-ended materials that encourage children to engage in self-directed and imaginative play, which nurtures creativity, language acquisition, executive functioning, and abstract reasoning.<sup>14,15,16</sup> The dynamic features of outdoor settings also facilitate the development of children's observation and problem-solving skills.<sup>17</sup> In addition, nature contact restores attention and improves focus, particularly for individuals with ADHD,<sup>18</sup> and physical activity has an acute effect on children's concentration and cognitive functioning.<sup>19</sup>

**Nature “offers a multisensory smorgasbord of seeing, hearing, touching, and tasting, immersing children in a much grander world than can ever be captured indoors.”**

**Scott Sampson**  
*How to Raise a Wild Child*

Nature play also greatly benefits children's social-emotional development and psychological well-being. Through challenging and risky play experiences, children learn to assess and manage their interactions with their surroundings and cultivate resilience, independence, self-regulation, and self-efficacy.<sup>20,21</sup> Outdoor playscapes support collaboration, peer negotiation, and conflict

resolution because “the natural setting creates a calm, sensory-rich — but not sensory overloaded — environment” and a sense of expansive time that enable children to navigate social tensions.<sup>22</sup> In addition, research reveals the positive influence of nature contact on mood and psychological health, including reducing feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression.<sup>23,24</sup> Frequent positive experiences in outdoor settings nurture children's empathy for inhabitants of the natural world and emotional attachment to special places.<sup>25</sup> Nature play opportunities give rise to a love and respect for nature and environmentally responsible attitudes and behaviors.<sup>26</sup>

## Reflection Questions

**How can you encourage active play in your outdoor playspace? Who currently has access to active play and how can you support all children in the program to engage in active play?**

**How can you increase and diversify the affordances in your playspace?**

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# Educator well-being

Educator well-being is an important consideration in educational contexts because it is closely related to educator retention, quality of teaching practices, and student experiences in the early learning setting. Educator burnout and attrition are serious concerns at both the school and system level, and increasing educator well-being is one key way to confront these challenges. Educators with high levels of psychological well-being, strong social and emotional support systems, and appropriate coping strategies may build higher-quality relationships with learners, be more engaged in their teaching, and manage their early learning environments more effectively.<sup>1</sup> Educators' self-efficacy in particular is associated with benefits for students' academic and psychological well-being.<sup>2</sup> Many factors contribute to educator well-being, including social cohesion and social capital<sup>3</sup> — the extent to which educators feel a sense of belonging and mutual respect in their school community — and supportive professional learning communities.<sup>4</sup>

The natural world has a powerful influence on human health and psychological well-being.<sup>5</sup> Human relationships with nature include multiple dimensions. *Nature contact*

refers to discrete interactions with nature, which can be brief, intermittent, regular, or sustained. *Nature connectedness* describes the individual's subjective understanding of their connection with nature. Research indicates that both nature contact and nature connectedness are associated with hedonic well-being, or in-the-moment positive experiences, as well as eudaimonic well-being, which refers to deeper feelings of life meaning, autonomy, self-awareness, vitality, awe, spiritual transcendence, and prosociality.<sup>6,7</sup>

**“Theoretical perspectives suggest a range of possibilities: 1) contact with nature acts as a medium for restoration, 2) contact with nature provides an opportunity for emotional care, 3) nature provides a mirror for in-depth reflection or 4) contact with nature provides an opportunity to rekindle an innate union.”**

**Eric Brymer, Thomas Cuddihy, & Vinathe Sharma-Brymer**  
“The Role of Nature-Based Experiences in the Development and Maintenance of Wellness”

Several theoretical frameworks help to explain the importance of nature for human well-being. The biophilia hypothesis proposes that humans have an innate and evolutionarily grounded tendency to affiliate with life and living things.<sup>8,9</sup> Attention restoration theory describes how the “soft fascination” of nature invites involuntary attention and restores individuals' cognitive resources that are depleted through everyday use of directed attention.<sup>10</sup> Stress reduction theory proposes that nature's positive effects on psychological well-being occur through a mechanism of improved stress recovery. In addition to these broad influences on psychological well-being, nature contact and connectedness also have positive effects on teaching practices in particular. Educators respond more favorably to playspaces with higher levels of vegetation<sup>11</sup> and green spaces increase educators' motivation to teach.<sup>12</sup> Teaching in outdoor environments can build educators' confidence and enthusiasm and facilitate their development of innovative pedagogical practices.<sup>13</sup> Thus, nature-enriched early childhood education has great potential to nurture educator well-being, improve their practice, and support child development.

## Reflection Questions

**What structures and strategies are currently in place at your program to support educator well-being? What personal well-being practices are educators currently enacting within and outside of the program setting?**

**How can nature experiences be incorporated into your program setting in order to improve educators' and children's well-being?**



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# Risky play and risk management

Children need risky play for numerous reasons and they frequently seek out or create opportunities to fulfill their need for risky play. Outdoor settings afford a range of challenging play scenarios and require an approach to risk management that balances the developmental benefits of free play in risky environments with the maintenance of a hazard-free playspace.

Risky play is essential to children's learning and growth. Children develop risk management and decision-making skills by encountering risks in play settings and they build resilience, perseverance, confidence, and self-reliance through overcoming challenges.<sup>1,2</sup> Risky play supports other indirect benefits such as children's exploration of their physical abilities and limits, engagement in contextualized investigation of scientific concepts such as force and movement, and social skills like peer negotiation and mutual encouragement.<sup>3</sup> Risky play takes many forms such as handling dangerous tools, playing near dangerous elements (eg. fire, water), exploring heights, playing at high speeds, rough-and-tumble play, and playing on one's own away from direct adult supervision.<sup>4</sup> Risky play may be evolutionarily advantageous by reducing fearful responses and supporting children's courage and independence.<sup>5</sup> <sup>6</sup> Children have an innate desire for risk-taking and construct potentially dangerous situations if not provided with reasonable options for risky play.<sup>7</sup>

In the United States and many other Western nations, opportunities for outdoor risky play have diminished as a

result of overscheduled childhoods, increased traffic and high-density housing associated with urbanization, and a societal mindset of risk aversion that leads to hyper-regulated play environments.<sup>8,9</sup> Despite the relatively low dangers and significant benefits of risky play, parents are often risk paranoid.<sup>10</sup> Caregivers in the U.S. frequently attempt to eliminate risk entirely and childproof play settings rather than supporting children in learning to manage reasonable risks. The culture and regulatory approach of risk aversion is detrimental in the long run because it impedes children's physical, social, cognitive, and emotional development.<sup>11</sup> However, examples from Scandinavian early childhood programs demonstrate an alternative understanding of risky play and its positive outcomes. There is also a growing number of forest kindergartens and nature preschools in the United States that embrace risky play in outdoor settings as an opportunity for learning and healthy development.<sup>12</sup>

**“The benefits of taking some risks will usually far outweigh the dangers, and through this children are given a sense of independence, freedom and choice. They learn to make decisions based on their own opinions without intervention from adults; they work with others, share ideas. Children grow in confidence, develop a sense of trust of each other and learn through their own mistakes. Children learn to use tools with safety and care; they grow stronger and braver, share their experiences with others and develop into sensible explorers.”**

**Karen Constable**  
*The Outdoor Classroom Ages 3-7*

A more balanced approach to risk management requires clarifying the difference between risks and hazards. In risky play, outcomes are uncertain and there is a possibility of injury, and children choose whether and how to engage. Research indicates that children are capable of monitoring and regulating their own engagement with risk, including sometimes withdrawing from risky situations, in order to maintain optimal levels of arousal, fear, and exhilaration.<sup>13,14</sup> In contrast, hazardous situations pose a high likelihood of harm and the dangers are invisible and can't be recognized and evaluated by children.<sup>15,16</sup>

Educators can do much to support risky play within their own program contexts without putting children in danger. They can scaffold children's engagement in risk-benefit assessments, which supports children's development of observation, decision-making, and planning skills. They can also nurture children's sense of responsibility by discussing the boundaries of play and conveying to children the importance of their own role in upholding the rules.<sup>17</sup> Educators can approach the creation of playspaces and facilitation of play with an attitude of “as safe as necessary” rather than “as safe as possible.”<sup>18</sup> Rather than trying to control children's outdoor experiences<sup>19</sup> educators can utilize a combination of risk management strategies, including keeping a close eye without interfering, choosing to sometimes be distant or not present, and contributing to or even initiating risky play, in addition to constraining play when it is genuinely necessary for children's safety.<sup>20</sup>

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## Reflection Questions

- How does your program currently think about, talk about, and manage risk in children's play?
- How can you incorporate outdoor risky play into your program's daily routines?



**“It is a powerful catalyst for growth that helps them develop good judgment, persistence, courage, resiliency, and self-confidence.”**

**David Sobel**  
*Nature Preschools and Forest Kindergartens*





# STEM outdoors and standards

The natural world is a rich resource for early childhood learning, especially in building a strong foundation for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) thinking. Through educator-scaffolded as well as self-directed exploratory play, outdoor environments can support alignment with early childhood STEM standards and cultivate children’s abilities and affinities in preparation for later learning.

When children engage in unstructured outdoor play, they often spontaneously enact scientific practices and construct deep, contextualized understandings of STEM concepts. These practices include comparing and classifying, measuring and enumerating, exploring and manipulating physical properties, collaborative investigating, and systematic inquiring and problem solving processes.<sup>1 2 3 4</sup> Children develop intuitive understandings of movement, spatial relationships, and other physical principles.<sup>5</sup> Free play in natural environments is powerful because it provides the time and space for children to become engrossed in meaningful, self-selected learning experiences.<sup>6</sup> Repeated immersion in an outdoor context over time allows children to construct knowledge through iterative experimentation.<sup>7</sup>

**“...under supportive conditions, even very young children are capable of building meaning around ‘big ideas’ in science, and exploration of the natural world provides the perfect setting for this to happen.”**

**Daniel R. Meier & Stephanie Sisk-Hilton**  
*Nature Education with Young Children*

Young children’s nature experiences are most conducive to STEM learning when they are grounded in concrete, embodied activity. For example, active exploration and sensorimotor stimulation support verbal development through the co-activation of the brain’s motor and linguistic areas, creating “physical associations that could make the concepts more visceral and intuitive.”<sup>8</sup> Motor engagement is particularly beneficial for acquiring language about actions, forces, and physical objects — language that is crucial for STEM learning. Educators’ incorporation of embodied illustrations of scientific ideas such as evaporation can also enable young children to develop conceptual understanding and “talk science” without mastering technical terminology.<sup>9</sup>

More generally, authentic activity in outdoor settings gives rise to a local, personalized vocabulary that is a rich foundation for STEM learning.<sup>10</sup>

STEM learning in early childhood should focus on close-to-home settings rather than distant places and abstract ideas. Teaching of environmental knowledge and stewardship in early childhood should be rooted in empathy with the natural world and its more-than-human inhabitants rather than an overemphasis on facts.<sup>11</sup> Positive affective experiences in early childhood lead to wonder, curiosity, and a love of nature that can motivate ecological and STEM learning more broadly. Educators can scaffold and extend inquiry as it arises according to what is important to children in local settings — for example, by introducing ideas such as classification, part-to-whole relations, structures and functions, patterns, cycles, and systems.<sup>12</sup> Teachers should offer questions rather than answers and build a culture of collaborative discovery that encourages children to describe and investigate their noticings.<sup>13</sup> Nature journaling contributes to children’s observation, multimodal representation, and record-keeping abilities.<sup>14</sup> These practices nurture STEM-related competencies through play and learning motivated by children’s own curiosity.

## Reflection Questions

**How do educators in your setting incorporate STEM concepts and practices in children’s play and learning in meaningful ways?**

**What are the challenges and opportunities for supporting STEM learning in children’s nature play in your program?**



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# Garden and farm programs

Gardening in early learning contexts supports play and learning in a variety of ways, including fulfilling children's biopsychological affinity for interactions with living things and developmental need for a diversity of rich sensory stimuli.<sup>1</sup> Participation in garden programs is associated with greater knowledge about nutrition and healthy eating habits.<sup>2,3,4</sup> Gardening and farming also nurture children's understanding of ecosystems and food systems and their development of environmental attitudes, values, and behaviors.<sup>5,6</sup> In terms of curriculum content, gardening provides ample opportunity for experiential learning and exploration of math, science, and language concepts grounded in authentic activity.<sup>7</sup> Caring for a garden cultivates children's motivation, pride, and positive social relationships and fosters their holistic learning and growth.<sup>8</sup>

Creating a garden or farm program involves a number of considerations. In order to encourage children's sense of responsibility and stewardship, their agency should be foregrounded in all aspects of the planning, implementation, and maintenance processes.<sup>9</sup> The goals of the space should be co-constructed with stakeholders

**Gardens “offer up fonts of opportunity for adopting a place-based, science-as-wholes approach, underlining the interrelationships of everything.”**

**Scott Sampson**  
*How to Raise a Wild Child*



and clearly articulated — for example, will the program emphasize ecologically valuable plantings or schoolyard beautification? Will the space be used primarily for structured learning or unstructured play? Regardless of these factors, the garden should include a variety of features (eg. open areas and private spaces) and offer multiple modes of engagement (eg. water play, sensory play, exploration) that accommodate a range of ages and interests. Since “touching, tasting, smelling, and pulling apart are also vital,” multimodal interaction may often entail balancing the interests of the children and the space.<sup>10</sup>



## Reflection Questions

- What are the potential challenges and opportunities of a garden or farm program at your site?**
- What are the primary objectives for a garden or farm space in your community (including the perspectives of children, families, and program staff)?**



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# Translating to local contexts

The implementation of nature-based early learning can take many forms and draw inspiration from several different models that share a belief in the value of frequent experiences in nature for children’s learning and ecological consciousness.<sup>1</sup> At *nature preschools*, children spend 25-50 percent of the day outdoors and the natural world is utilized to enact high quality practices and support developmental goals from the fields of early childhood education and environmental education. Children in *forest kindergartens* are outside for 70-100 percent of the day regardless of weather conditions and learn through an emergent, child-centered curriculum. Other programs incorporate nature by building community partnerships and bringing children regularly to a nearby natural space.<sup>2,3</sup> Nature-centered learning can be tailored to the particular opportunities and constraints of each early childhood program. Natural play spaces are optimal for teacher-guided pedagogy as well as the unstructured, child-initiated play that is crucial for young children’s health, well-being, and learning — balance between these priorities should be established by each program based on their own needs and objectives.<sup>4</sup>

**“Tune your sensibilities to seeing the affordances and opportunities in the niches and interstices of urban parks, suburban backyards, plain old marshy woods, cemetery edges. Often we don’t need to spend lots of money to find suitably wonderful natural areas that allow children to spend a bit more time in Neverland.”**

**David Sobel**  
*Nature Preschools and Forest Kindergartens*



The physical context of outdoor play should be designed with intentionality and through collaboration with stakeholders, including families, children, and staff. A natural learning space does not need to be expansive to serve as an exciting playspace for children; in fact, “ratty little thickets,”<sup>5</sup> unremarkable nooks, and enclosed hiding spots are often more special. If lack of space is a constraint, teachers can offer many of the benefits of nature play by introducing open-ended loose parts into the play area and coordinating trips to neighboring natural spaces. When imagining outdoor play spaces, educators should consider the overall character, the micro- and macro-context, the connectivity and clarity of spaces, the changes over time, and the availability of opportunities for children to challenge themselves and manipulate the environment.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, an analysis of existing outdoor classroom environments distilled a number of important design features: abundant choice, child-sized spaces, pathways and borders as playspaces, flexible spaces that can change over time, and community engagement and stewardship.<sup>7</sup> These design frameworks for children’s playscapes offer adaptable principles to support the implementation of outdoor play in local contexts.

## Reflection Questions

**What opportunities for nature-centered play and learning are available in your program setting? What are some short-term and long-term initiatives you can enact to increase nature play?**

**How can you build connections with community stakeholders and partner organizations in order to support children’s nature play?**



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This is a publication from Cultivate Learning. Cultivate Learning is a research center lead by Executive Director Gail E. Joseph, Ph.D., in the College of Education at the University of Washington.

This work was supported by funding from the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families as part of the Quality Ratings and Improvement System Assessment, Ratings, and Training Contract #18-089-03.



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*Education We Need for the World We Want*



# Guidelines for Excellence Early Childhood Environmental Education Programs

For educators, parents, home schoolers, administrators,  
policy makers, and the public







# Guidelines for Excellence **Early Childhood Environmental Education Programs**

For educators, parents, home schoolers, administrators,  
policy makers, and the public



**naaee**

North American Association  
for Environmental Education

***Early Childhood Environmental Education Programs: Guidelines for Excellence*** is part of a continuing series of documents published by the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) as part of the National Project for Excellence in Environmental Education. The project is committed to synthesizing the best thinking about environmental education through an extensive process of review and discussion. Hundreds of individuals and organizations representing all aspects of early childhood education and environmental education reviewed working outlines and drafts. Reviewers include classroom teachers, daycare and early childhood education center staff members, educational administrators, environmental scientists, curriculum developers, and natural resource agency and education department staff members.

This project was funded by the Office of Environmental Education at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) through the Environmental Education and Training Partnership (EETAP) and EECapacity.

The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the U.S. EPA, nor does mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation for use.

Additional funding and support for this project has been received from Northern Illinois University, the University of Oregon, and the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation.

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NAAEE is the professional organization for environmental educators in North America and beyond.

ISBN 978-1-884008-23-8

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## EARLY CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS: GUIDELINES FOR EXCELLENCE

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## Introduction

**Y**oung children are active and inquisitive. Everything is worth exploration with all of their senses. Their minds and bodies are growing at a phenomenal pace, developing neural connections they will use for the rest of their lives. Learning is everything; experience is everything. Whether it is the taste of a carrot freshly picked from the garden, the sight of sunlight on a dewdrop, or the sound of music made with some rocks found in the yard, young children are making discoveries and creating connections. They are beginning to understand their individuality and the individuality of others. They are beginning to build relationships between themselves and others and between themselves and the world around them. Providing opportunities for the growth and development of the whole child, opportunities to develop a sense of wonder about nature, and earnest engagement in discovery about the real world are the foundation for learning in early childhood. It is vital for early childhood environmental education programs to build this foundation.

### WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD?

Environmental education in early childhood is a holistic concept that encompasses knowledge of the natural world as well as emotions, dispositions, and skills. According to Ruth Wilson (1994), environmental education in early childhood includes the development of a sense of wonder; appreciation for the beauty and mystery of the natural world; opportunities to experience the joy of closeness to nature; and respect for other creatures. It also includes the development of problem-solving skills



SHEILA WILLIAMS RIDGE

and the development of interest and appreciation in the world around us. These goals acknowledge that learning is more than a cognitive process and that emotions play a particularly important role (See Harlan and Rivkin, 2008). Therefore, early childhood educators should provide opportunities for children to experience peace, joy, and fascination with nature because these emotions undergird their developing knowledge, skills, and dispositions (Gardner, 1999).

Early Childhood Environmental Education Programs: Guidelines for Excellence contains a set of recommendations for developing and administering high-quality environmental education programs for

### KINDERGARTEN

The founder of early childhood education, Friedrich Froebel, began the first kindergarten—literally “children’s garden”—in the nineteenth century. These kindergartens had individual gardens for each child, enclosed by a communal garden. Children used their gardens as they wished, for play and experimenting, gaining firsthand experience. They helped with the communal garden, and often explored the surrounding fields and woods. Froebel believed that children should grow in harmony with nature. Other pioneers of early childhood education shared Froebel’s emphasis on the connection between young children and nature.



young children from birth to age eight, with a focus on ages three to six. These guidelines provide a tool that can be used to ensure a firm foundation for new programs or to trigger improvements in existing ones. The overall goal of these guidelines is to chart an appropriate and positive process whereby educators can start young children on their journey toward becoming environmentally responsive youth and adults. This overall goal is shared with the other guidelines produced by the North American Association for Environmental Education's Project for Excellence in Environmental Education.

## HOW EARLY CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION DIFFERS FROM ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FOR OLDER STUDENTS AND ADULTS

The goal of environmental education, according to the Belgrade Charter (UNESCO, 1976, p. 2), is "to develop a world population that is aware of, and concerned about, the environment and its associated problems, and which has the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivations, and commitment to work individually and collectively toward solutions of current problems and the prevention of new ones." The ultimate goal of environmental education is the development of an environmentally literate citizenry. Environmentally literate individuals understand environmental issues and how human decisions affect environmental quality. In addition, they use this knowledge to make informed, well-reasoned choices that also take social and political considerations into account. As important as knowledge about environmental issues and their human aspects are, they must be complemented by

a positive and caring attitude toward the environment. Research has shown that most attitudes are formed very early in life, and this is why it is so important for environmental education to begin in early childhood.

Environmental education programs for formal K–12 classrooms tend to include a somewhat structured approach to knowledge acquisition, data collection, information analysis, and application of various action skills. The approach to environmental education for early childhood learners is less about organization of graduated achievements and more about free discovery on each child's own terms. Personal perceptions, attitudes, and connections with nature are the key goals at this stage, and facilitating positive experiences varies from child to child. These guidelines emphasize the development of individual feelings, beliefs, and inner unity with nature that are so critical in the early years.

Particularly for very young children, environmental education should incorporate exploring woodlands, getting wet feet, climbing rocks, building with sticks, running on grass, turning over rocks, following insects, stomping in puddles, and so forth. Children are developing a relationship with the natural world. They are learning how to gently hold a worm, examine it, and then return it to its habitat. They are learning to appreciate all kinds of weather. They are learning how to explore and use tools of exploration such as magnifying glasses and popsicle sticks. Children are watching plants and animals change through their life cycles, and

### THE VERY EARLY YEARS

Infants are born with well-developed senses, and have a wide range of reflexive abilities for beginning the important tasks of forming relationships and developing trust, having their basic physical needs met and exploring the world around them. With nurturing and responsive caregiving, appropriate environmental stimulation, optimal health, and adequate nutrition, babies will grow from being totally dependent to becoming active participants in exploring and shaping their world.

Infants and toddlers are eager and curious learners, gaining knowledge and understanding of themselves and the world around them from every experience of daily living. Dramatic changes occur in every area of development, and growth in one area influences growth in all other areas (Nebraska Department of Education Early Childhood Training Center, 2005).

learning respect for the natural world and living things. Children who respect the environment feel an emotional attachment to the natural world, and deeply understand the link between themselves and nature, will become environmentally literate citizens. The task of environmental education for young children is to forge the bond between children and nature.

Early childhood environmental education focuses on developmentally appropriate conservation

concepts and avoids an explicitly problem-oriented approach. Young children do not have the coping skills to face the tragedies of environmental crises and problems. When faced with the loss of endangered species and environmental degradation, young children may respond with sadness, fear, and helplessness, which can lead to a defensive apathy. In early childhood, it is important to concentrate on building a foundation that will allow for positive examination of issues and appropriate action later in life.

## HOW TO USE THESE GUIDELINES

Early Childhood Environmental Education Programs: Guidelines for Excellence identifies six key characteristics of high-quality early childhood environmental education programs. For each of these characteristics, guidelines are then listed that early childhood programs should follow. Finally, each guideline is accompanied by several indicators listed under the heading “What to look for.” These indicators suggest ways of gauging whether the program being reviewed or developed addresses the guidelines. Indicators are simply clusters of attributes you might look for to help you determine whether the characteristic is embodied in the program you are reviewing or developing.

Early Childhood Environmental Education Programs: Guidelines for Excellence is designed to assist and help the educators, administrator, or program developers concerned about the quality of early childhood environmental education programs. The guidelines provide direction yet offer flexibility in shaping content, technique, and other aspects of program delivery. These guidelines can be used to offer a way of judging the relative merit of different programs, provide standards and benchmarks for new programs, and supply a set of ideas about what a well-rounded early childhood environmental education program might be like.

It is not reasonable to expect that every early childhood environmental education program will follow



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all of the guidelines. For example, a program might not have a structured evaluation or assessment plan in place. This shortcoming does not necessarily mean that the program is fatally flawed. In cases such as this one, Early Childhood Environmental Education Programs: Guidelines for Excellence can illuminate areas for improvement.

The guidelines are just that, a set of guidelines. They are not intended to cover every possible detail of what constitutes a high-quality program. However, Early Childhood Environmental Education Programs: Guidelines for Excellence provides a foundation on which to build programs that reflect exemplary practice. As a tool to inform judgment, these guidelines may contribute to more effective environmental education for young children.

## HOW THE GUIDELINES WERE DEVELOPED

This document was developed by a writing team comprising environmental education and early childhood education professionals from a variety of backgrounds and organizational affiliations. The team made every effort to ensure that the Early Childhood Environmental Education Programs: Guidelines for Excellence reflected a widely shared understanding of best practice. This team has taken on the challenge of turning ideas about quality into usable guidelines. In addition, drafts of these guidelines were circulated widely to practitioners and scholars in the field (e.g., teachers, nonformal educators, child psychologists, educational administrators, and curriculum developers), and their comments were incorporated into successive revisions of the document.

## HOW DO THESE GUIDELINES LINK TO OTHER GUIDELINES IN THIS SERIES?

Early Childhood Environmental Education Programs: Guidelines for Excellence is one of a continuing series of documents being developed as part of the North American Association for Environmental Education's National Project for Excellence in Environmental Education. Taken together, the comprehensive set of guidelines constitutes a set of tools that can provide a firm grounding for practitioners in the theory and practice of environmental education and can help to elevate their work to the highest level of quality.

### SAMPLE FORMAT FOR THE GUIDELINES

#### Key Characteristic

##### 1.1) Guideline

##### What to look for:

- Indicator
- Indicator

##### 1.2) Guideline

##### What to look for:

- Indicator
- Indicator



SHEILA WILLIAMS RIDGE

Each resource in the series has been developed to respond to specific needs identified by the environmental education community. As with this publication, every resource in the series has been developed with an intensive research-based and peer-reviewed process. Particularly relevant documents are detailed below, and the entire series is described inside the back cover of this publication.

Early Childhood Environmental Education Programs: Guidelines for Excellence is designed to integrate synergistically with other publications in the series:

Excellence in Environmental Education: Guidelines for Learning (K–12) (North American Association for Environmental Education, 2010) details the understandings and skills needed for students' environmental literacy.

Guidelines for the Preparation and Professional Development of Environmental Educators (North American Association for Environmental Education, 2010) specifies the competencies that instructors need in order to use educational materials and

other resources to be successful in their efforts to help the learner achieve the goal of environmental literacy.

Environmental Education Materials: Guidelines for Excellence (North American Association for Environmental Education, 2009) provides criteria for the selection and development of high-quality environmental education instruction materials.

## WHY ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION?

For many, environmental education is rooted in the belief that humans can live compatibly with nature and act equitably toward each other. Another fundamental belief is that people can make informed decisions that consider not only the well-being of the earth, but future generations. Environmental education aims for an effective, environmentally literate citizenry that seeks to participate with creativity and responsibility in our world and with each other in the twenty-first century.

Environmental education often begins close to home, encouraging learners to understand and forge

connections with their immediate surroundings. The environmental awareness, knowledge, and skills needed for this localized learning provide a foundation for moving out into larger systems, broader issues, and a more sophisticated comprehension of causes, connections, and consequences.

Whether working with adults or children, effective environmental education is learner-centered and provides participants with opportunities to construct their own understanding through hands-on investigations. Engaged in direct experiences, learners are challenged to use higher-order thinking skills as active, responsive problem solvers. Environmental education provides real-world contexts and issues from which concepts and skills can be learned.

## THE ROOTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The Belgrade Charter (UNESCO, 1976) was adopted by a United Nations conference in 1976 and provides a widely accepted goal statement for environmental education. A few years later, the world's first intergovernmental conference

## ESSENTIAL UNDERPINNINGS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The essential underpinnings of environmental education were first identified in Guidelines for Learning (K–12) (North American Association for Environmental Education, 2010). These basic overarching themes are relevant to early childhood, but in slightly different ways:

**Systems:** Children live in and learn about systems: families, communities of people, animals, and plants.

**Interdependence:** People are connected to each other and to nature. What we eat, drink, breathe, and wear is drawn from nature, and we have an impact on nature as well.

**The importance of where one lives:** It is important for children to know the sights, sounds, and smells of their own habitat. Nature is a part of our local environment, whether it is a backyard, vacant lot, park, or nature center.

**Integration and Infusion:** Environmental education does not have to be a separate activity or “subject,” and is best integrated with experiences in a variety of curricular areas (literacy, creative arts, mathematics, science, health, daily routines).

**Roots in the real world:** Direct experience with authentic materials is a hallmark of early childhood education; sorting leaves and seeds, digging for worms, and identifying local birds, insects, and plants are all activities that may help children become grounded in the natural world.

**Lifelong learning:** Inspiring curiosity about the world, creative thinking and problem solving, and collaborative learning can build a strong foundation for lifelong learning.



on environmental education adopted the Tbilisi Declaration (UNESCO, 1978). This declaration built on the Belgrade Charter and established three broad objectives for environmental education. These objectives, which follow, provide the foundation for much of what has been done in the field since 1978:

- To foster clear awareness of and concern about economic, social, political, and ecological interdependence in urban and rural areas;
- To provide every person with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes, commitment, and skills needed to protect and improve the environment;
- To create new patterns of behavior of individuals, groups, and society as a whole toward the environment.

As the field has evolved, these objectives have been researched, critiqued, revisited, and expanded. They still stand as a strong foundation for an internationally shared view of the core concepts and skills that environmentally literate citizens need to develop a sustainable, equitable, and positive society. Since 1978, bodies such as the Brundtland Commission (United Nations, 1987), the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio (UNCED, 1992), the International Conference on Environment and Society in Thessaloniki (UNESCO, 1997), and the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (United Nations, 2002) have influenced the work of many environmental educators. By highlighting the importance of viewing the environment within the context of human influences, this perspective has expanded the emphasis of environmental education by focusing more attention on social equity, economics, culture, and political structure.

## CALL TO ACTION: RECONNECTING THE WORLD'S CHILDREN TO NATURE

Presented at the Working Forum on Nature Education: New Tools for Connecting the World's Children with Nature, an international event held at Arbor Day Farm, Nebraska City, Nebraska, USA, July 2008

Children grow healthier, wiser, and more content when they are more fully connected throughout their childhood to the natural environment in as many educational and recreational settings as possible. These benefits are long-term and significant and contribute to their future well-being and the contributions they will make to the world as adults.

This document calls for a commitment to action in recognition that children and youth of the world benefit in many ways and across multiple domains of learning and development when they become more connected to the natural world around them.

The Call to Action beckons families, educators, and community leaders worldwide to take action, to strengthen children's connection to nature—making developmentally appropriate nature education a sustaining and enriching, fully integrated part of the daily lives and education of the world's children.

The Call to Action was initiated by the Nebraska Department of Education in partnership with the World Forum—Nature Action Collaborative for Children State Leadership Team, the Nebraska Nature Action Collaborative for Children, and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education.

# Summary of Early Childhood Environmental Education Programs: Guidelines for Excellence

## KEY CHARACTERISTIC 1: PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY, PURPOSE, AND DEVELOPMENT

- Guideline 1.1—Focus on nature and the environment
- Guideline 1.2—Focus on education of young children
- Guideline 1.3—Culturally appropriate goals, objectives, and practices
- Guideline 1.4—Environmental literacy: board, staff, and providers
- Guideline 1.5—Health and safety
- Guideline 1.6—Ongoing evaluation and assessment
- Guideline 1.7—Partnerships
- Guideline 1.8—Interpersonal and intergenerational relationships

## KEY CHARACTERISTIC 2: DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICES

- Guideline 2.1—Based on research and theory
- Guideline 2.2—Authentic experiences
- Guideline 2.3—Child-directed and inquiry-based
- Guideline 2.4—The whole child

## KEY CHARACTERISTIC 3: PLAY AND EXPLORATION

- Guideline 3.1—Use of the natural world and natural materials
- Guideline 3.2—Play and the role of adults

## KEY CHARACTERISTIC 4: CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK FOR ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING

- Guideline 4.1—Social and emotional growth
- Guideline 4.2—Curiosity and questioning
- Guideline 4.3—Development of environmental understandings
- Guideline 4.4—Skills for understanding the environment
- Guideline 4.5—A personal sense of responsibility and caring
- Guideline 4.6—Physical health and development

## KEY CHARACTERISTIC 5: PLACES AND SPACES

Guideline 5.1—Spaces and places to enhance development

Guideline 5.2—Natural components

Guideline 5.3—Comfortable for both children and adults

Guideline 5.4—Maintenance and usability

Guideline 5.5—Health, safety, and risk

Guideline 5.6—Environmental sustainability

## KEY CHARACTERISTIC 6: EDUCATOR PREPARATION

Guideline 6.1—Foundations of early childhood environmental education

Guideline 6.2—Professional responsibilities of the educator

Guideline 6.3—Environmental literacy

Guideline 6.4—Planning and implementing environmental education

Guideline 6.5—Fostering learning

Guideline 6.6—Assessment and evaluation



## KEY CHARACTERISTIC 1: PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY, PURPOSE, AND DEVELOPMENT

GUIDELINE 1.1—FOCUS ON NATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

GUIDELINE 1.2—FOCUS ON EDUCATION OF YOUNG CHILDREN

GUIDELINE 1.3—CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND PRACTICES

GUIDELINE 1.4—ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY: BOARD, STAFF, AND PROVIDERS

GUIDELINE 1.5—HEALTH AND SAFETY

GUIDELINE 1.6—ONGOING EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

GUIDELINE 1.7—PARTNERSHIPS

GUIDELINE 1.8—INTERPERSONAL AND INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS



## Key Characteristic 1: Program Philosophy, Purpose, and Development

**E**arly childhood environmental education programs articulate an overarching philosophy that guides all program activities. Goals and objectives state how the program meets the needs of young children and their community.

### GUIDELINE 1.1—FOCUS ON NATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The program's philosophy, goals, and objectives related to nature and the environment are established and clearly articulated. A coherent environmental philosophy and set of practices are articulated for all aspects of the program, including staff development, teaching, curriculum, evaluation, site design, indoor and outdoor classroom design, maintenance, and materials.

What to look for:

- The development of the program's environmental philosophy includes the staff, the families and their children, and the program's environmental philosophy is shared with all program stakeholders and interested community members.
- Beliefs and practices related to issues such as the intrinsic value of nature are articulated in the program's environmental philosophy. In doing so, the program philosophy addresses issues such as
  - appropriate specimen collection (e.g., flowers, leaves, insects, pinecones, nuts, rocks)



- adults as role models for the care of plants and animals in the environment
- the development of respect and a sense of stewardship
- modeling environmental responsibility in facility design, maintenance, materials, and waste management

### GUIDELINE 1.2—FOCUS ON EDUCATION OF YOUNG CHILDREN

Program philosophy, goals, and objectives related to the education of young children are clearly articulated.

What to look for:

- Developmentally appropriate practices as articulated by such nationally recognized groups as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) are used as the basis of the program's philosophy, goals, and objectives.

### LEAVE IT ALONE OR BRING IT HOME?

"At our school, we tell children that the natural materials are here so everyone that visits can enjoy them, and they need to stay there to continue to grow. We let children pick invasive or abundant species of flowers, like dandelions or garlic mustard, where they can 'do good' while picking a few beautiful flowers. We also grow flowers, fruits, and vegetables that are planted with the purpose of harvesting."

—Minnesota teacher

- Current theories about children's learning, including children with special needs, are reflected in programs and instruction.
- The program's learning opportunities take into account the realities of the child's life.
- Learning is place-based and applicable to all children in all settings.
- The child's learning (individually and in a group) is supported by programs and instruction.
- The abilities of each child are supported by the environment and activities employed.
- Goals, objectives, and practices are correlated to local, state, and national standards when appropriate (e.g., Head Start Path to Positive Outcomes [see Appendix E], NAEYC Standards [National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2006]).



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## SOME ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF PICKING AND COLLECTING

In the end, each program needs to make the choice between two good things: picking flowers for classrooms or study, or letting flowers live out their natural life cycle. When there are animals, plants, or natural materials, young children are interested in touching, picking, and collecting them. They often want to "give this one to my mom" or "add this to my collection." Whether children are exploring a beach or a conservatory, adults can model behavior that demonstrates to children that some things are okay to add to a collection, and some things need to stay where they are found. For example, one center has set aside a collection area where picking is allowed and a preserved area where research is conducted and no picking is allowed. Programs should establish guidelines for collecting that take into consideration the goal of providing children with the richest authentic experiences of nature while modeling respect for living things.

Programs can set guidelines for collecting such as

- ◆ asking permission
- ◆ collecting only what one needs
- ◆ handling plants and animals gently and with respect
- ◆ restoring natural materials to where you found them when you leave

When there is a small animal or insect for which you can provide an adequate habitat, there are plenty in the environment, and the animal can be returned to its natural habitat in a reasonable amount of time, it may be beneficial for the children to bring this animal into the classroom for further observation. When there are only a few in the natural environment, educators can find a way to document the experience for children to enjoy through photographs, drawings, journals, and so forth. Consider alternatives to collection. For example, give each child a spray bottle to bring on a walk so they can give the plants a drink or allow them to photograph flowers they see instead of picking them. These are ways to interact but leave plants intact.

## ACCESS FOR ALL

All children, regardless of cultural background or physical, cognitive, emotional, or developmental challenges, benefit from time spent exploring their environment. Providing high-quality early childhood programs, and allowing children to follow their curiosities about their world and what nature has to offer, can bring incredible richness to their lives.

## THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Young children are embedded in their family culture. The child's cultural background includes the beliefs and practices related to daily life and child rearing (e.g., eating, sleeping, clothing, guidance and discipline, routines, relationships with others) as well as the family's home language and religious, ethnic, political, and geographic characteristics.

Respect a child's culture when planning a program. The goals and objectives of environmental education are shared by most cultures of the world, although some issues can raise controversy. Since many early environmental education activities involve living things and learning through concrete, firsthand experiences, it is important to recognize differences in families regarding attitudes toward their child's handling certain insects or creatures and their reverence toward some animals or plants in nature. Corn or maize is revered in traditional Mexican culture. Similarly, in certain cultural groups—especially in West Africa—using foods such as rice, beans, or other vegetables in art projects is viewed as wasteful. Using alternative materials to food is advisable. Some religions fear snakes and others use snakes in worship. Educators in a classroom with a pet snake should be aware of the child's family's relationship to snakes.

One nature-based preschool allows food for play only if it ends up as food for the school animals or outdoor wildlife. Dried corn in the sensory table feeds the chickens, for instance. Potatoes are not used for prints because they cannot be eaten afterwards. Such respect for food is part of this school's cultural value and reflects the values of the families they serve.

Educators need to inform all families of the proposed activities and valuable outcomes of their child's environmental education programming and encourage their participation. Family members can share stories of their own experiences cultivating plants and taking care of animals. Their participation is valuable during outdoor activities and with small groups indoors. Giving parents suggestions for things to do with their children at home and in their communities enables the whole family to become better observers of nature phenomena.

### Suggested Resources

- ◆ Almeras, B. G., Heath, D., Cooper, S. and Wynne, P. J. (2001). *Access Nature*. Reston, Virginia: National Wildlife Federation.
- ◆ Chalufour, I. and Worth, K. (2003). *Discovering nature with young children*. Saint Paul, Minnesota: Redleaf Press.
- ◆ Greenman, J. (2007). *Caring Spaces, Learning Places: Children's Environments that Work*. Redmond, WA: Exchange Press.
- ◆ Klein, M. D., Cook, R. E., and Richardson-Gibbs, A. M. (2001). *Strategies for including children with special needs in early childhood settings*. Albany, New York: Delmar Thomson Learning.

### GUIDELINE 1.3—CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND PRACTICES

The program's philosophy, goals, and objectives reflect the need for the early childhood environmental education program to incorporate, mirror, and accommodate the cultural traditions of the audiences served.

What to look for:

- The cultural traditions, perspectives, needs, and interests of the children served have been identified and the extent to which the program matches these traditions has been examined.
- Steps have been taken to develop a staff that has a good understanding of and sympathy with the cultural traditions of the children served.
- Individuals from the cultural traditions of the children served have assisted with the development, writing, and pilot testing of programs and materials.
- An advisory group is in place to provide direction, recommendations, and review of materials. The committee includes representatives from the different cultural traditions being served and works with the aid of a culturally competent facilitator, if appropriate.
- Programs and materials are pilot tested with members of the children being served and revised as needed to ensure that the cultural perspectives and traditions of the audiences are authentically included.
- Collaboration and feedback between the program administrators and representatives of the different cultural groups served is continuous.

### GUIDELINE 1.4—ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY: BOARD, STAFF, AND PROVIDERS

The program's philosophy, goals, and objectives promote the environmental literacy of board, staff, and providers.

What to look for:

- The components of environmental literacy are familiar to staff and providers.



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- Staff and providers promote the appreciation and value of outdoor experiences with all stakeholders, including the children served.
- Professional development focusing on environmental education and child development is provided for all staff.
- Current knowledge of basic environmental understandings is maintained by staff and providers
  - They understand locally relevant environmental issues and ethical concerns
  - They are aware of their own approaches to nature, including their conceptual understandings, attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions toward nature
  - They understand and apply child development principles, particularly as they relate to nature and the environment
  - They model appropriate behaviors such as recycling, turning lights off, respect for living things, and so forth



- They are trained to facilitate positive outdoor experiences
- They are trained to handle safety issues as families and other community members are invited to participate actively in sharing their knowledge and expertise with children, staff members, and providers

#### GUIDELINE 1.5—HEALTH AND SAFETY

The program's philosophy, goals, and objectives are designed to ensure the health and safety of the children served.

What to look for:

- Risk and safety are balanced; levels of acceptable risk are established in a risk management plan that is used both on-site and when traveling.
- Established health and safety regulations and standards are met (e.g., Americans with Disabilities Act, National Association for the Education of Young Children).

- Precautions are established relating to nature experiences such as plants, animals, water features, hiking, weather exposure, and so forth.
- All staff members are prepared to implement emergency plans (e.g., CPR and first-aid skills, awareness of steps to be taken in emergencies when outdoors or hiking).
- Continuous communication between parents and providers regarding the health and safety of the child is provided.
- Health and safety needs are addressed in facility management and maintenance (e.g., playground, indoor spaces, other outdoor areas).
- Criminal background checks have been conducted on staff members and volunteers.

#### GUIDELINE 1.6—ONGOING EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

The early childhood environmental education program has an evaluation and assessment plan that is instrumental to teaching and learning, program, and facility improvement.

### NATURE-ORIENTED ACTIVITIES FAMILIES CAN DO TOGETHER

**Growing plants.** If you have a sunny windowsill or a small patch of ground in the yard, you and your children can grow plants together. Don't want to buy seeds? Use seeds from your kitchen, such as avocado, orange, apple, grapefruit, peach, or pear. Try to sprout them on your windowsill—maybe they won't all grow, but how great to experiment. Try planting sprouted potatoes or get an organic sweet potato to root in water. Look for seeds in the fall that have gathered on the ground—acorns, black walnuts, pecans—and see if they will sprout.

**Night sky.** Go outside with your children and look up. What do you see—the moon? Stars? Satellites? Make up stories about the patterns you see in the stars (for more ideas: [www.globeatnight.org](http://www.globeatnight.org)).

**Field trips.** Take a fanny pack with magnifiers, nature guides, paper, and markers. Follow your curiosities. You don't have to go any farther than around the block or down to a nearby park.

#### Suggested Resources

- Green Hearts Institute for Nature in Early Childhood's A Parents' Guide for Nature Play (Finch, 2009)—[www.greenheartsinc.org/Parents\\_\\_Guide.html](http://www.greenheartsinc.org/Parents__Guide.html).
- National Wildlife Federation Be Out There Campaign—[www.nwf.org/Get-Outside/Be-Out-There.aspx](http://www.nwf.org/Get-Outside/Be-Out-There.aspx).
- Ward, J. (2008). *I Love Dirt: 52 Activities to Help You and Your Kids Discover the Wonders of Nature*. Boston, Massachusetts: Trumpeter Books.
- Nature Explore Families' Club (Arbor Day Foundation and Dimensions Educational Research Foundation, Nebraska [www.arborday.org/explore/families](http://www.arborday.org/explore/families)).



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#### What to look for:

- Overall program goals are reviewed and revised on a regular basis with participation by parents, caregivers, and community and staff members.
- Learning objectives for programs are reviewed and revised on a regular basis.
- Site facilities are reviewed and appropriate maintenance performed.
- Program objectives are clearly identified and evaluation methodology matches those objectives.
- Environmental learning outcomes are linked to applicable benchmarks and standards so that assessment tools can be utilized to determine gains made by individual students.

#### GUIDELINE 1.7—PARTNERSHIPS

Active communication is maintained with a variety of interested individuals and organizations to support networking, resource sharing, enhanced program development, and expanded audience outreach. Partnership activities strengthen their respective organizations.

#### What to look for:

- Caregivers are involved in the education process:
  - Parents and primary caregivers
  - Home and school enrichment programs
  - Parent organizations
  - Other family members
- Relationships with other national, state, and local organizations, businesses, and agencies are encouraged:
  - Youth organizations (Scouts, Future Farmers of America, 4-H)
  - Faith-based organizations
  - State and federal conservation agencies (Cooperative Extension, state fish and game agencies, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service)
  - Conservation organizations (Keep America Beautiful affiliates, local Alliance for Community Trees, Audubon chapters)



- Environmental education organizations (Project Learning Tree, Project WILD, Project WET, Nature Mapping, Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment [GLOBE], Leopold Education Project)
- Community and senior citizen centers
- Local businesses and organizations that support the same ideals
- Relationships with the wider education community are encouraged and developed:
  - Facilitators in programs that serve children such as zoos, nature and discovery museums, public libraries, and so forth
  - Early childhood teacher educators at two- and four-year colleges
  - University laboratory faculty members
  - Educators with local, state, and federal agencies and foundations (community education

or environmental foundations, Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of the Interior, Head Start Health, Human Services Child Resource and Referral)

- Public and private school professionals
- Staff members from professional teaching and curriculum development organizations (Association for Childhood Education International, National Association for the Education of Young Children, National Association of Elementary School Principals)

#### GUIDELINE 1.8—INTERPERSONAL AND INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Positive relationships among children and between children and adults are essential for developing a sense of personal responsibility, building a sense of being a community member, and promoting a feeling of personal worth.

What to look for:

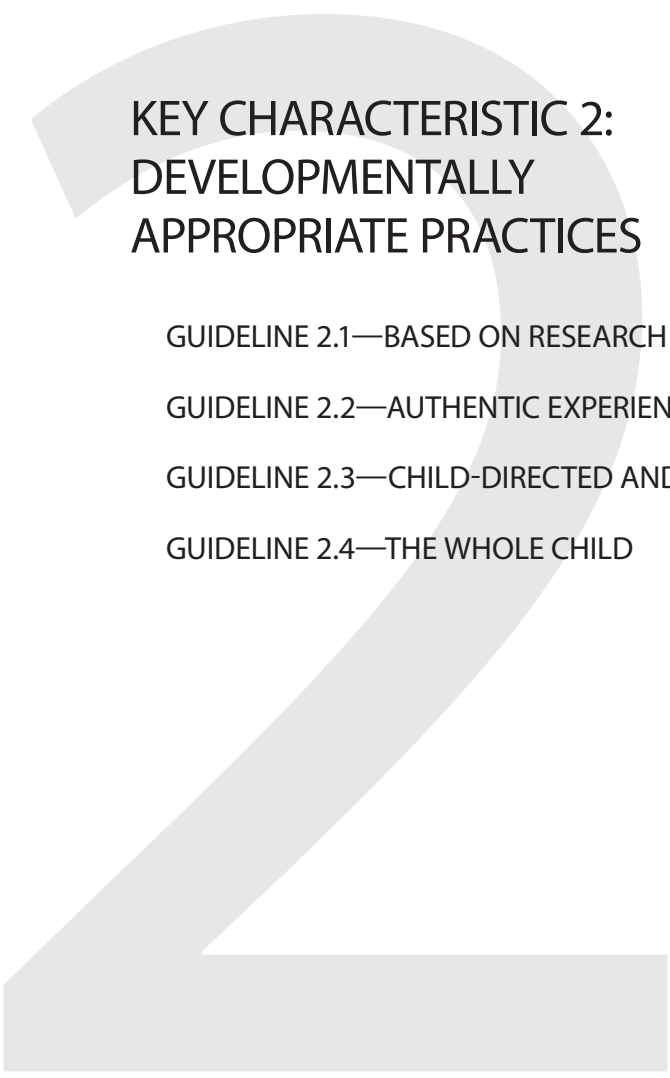
- Adult interactions with children are responsive, warm, and respectful.
- Children are encouraged to respect the feelings of others.
- Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions.
- Cooperation among children and with adults is stressed.

### FAMILY NATURE CLUBS

Happy Trails Family Nature Club is an informal, no-cost nature club that began in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul, Minnesota area. It was started by Jodi Hiland, a local parent who is committed to offering her own children as much time outdoors as possible. The club's vision is to help families spend more time communing with nature by arranging year-round, regularly scheduled nature outings that benefit everyone.

The club is open to anyone with a sense of adventure, and families are never obligated to participate more than they wish. The only requirements are that children must always be accompanied by adults in their family, and that the adults are responsible for their own children.

Around the country there are family nature clubs being established. To facilitate a new club in your area, please visit [www.arboday.org/explore](http://www.arboday.org/explore) or [www.childrenandnature.org/movement](http://www.childrenandnature.org/movement). Both organizations provide free materials to get families started in local nature adventures.



## KEY CHARACTERISTIC 2: DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICES

GUIDELINE 2.1—BASED ON RESEARCH AND THEORY

GUIDELINE 2.2—AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES

GUIDELINE 2.3—CHILD-DIRECTED AND INQUIRY-BASED

GUIDELINE 2.4—THE WHOLE CHILD



## Key Characteristic 2: Developmentally Appropriate Practices

**E**arly childhood environmental education is designed and implemented using established developmentally appropriate practice.

“...developmentally appropriate practice is matching the learning environment, the physical set up and materials, schedule, curriculum, teaching methods to the developmental levels of children” (Oltman, 2002, p. 2).

Because the natural and built environments offer such a large variety of sensory experiences for young children, the framework for these practices allows the educator to support the learning style of each individual child through their senses in all areas of development—social-emotional, cognitive, and physical. When children are able to explore their environment, interact with it, and communicate about it at their own developmental level, the educator can support and extend this learning by engaging in inquiry with the children. The educator supports the children’s learning through making connections to previous experiences, posing questions that help the children to reflect, and allowing the time that children need to explore their sense of wonder and awe.

“There is no magic formula for developmentally appropriate practice. Educators make decisions day by day, minute by minute, based on knowledge of how children develop and learn, the individual children and families in question, and the environmental, social, and cultural context” (Oltman, 2002, p. 2).

**GUIDELINE 2.1—BASED ON RESEARCH AND THEORY**  
Early childhood environmental educators understand and apply appropriate research and learning theory.



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What to look for:

- Early childhood educators are knowledgeable about educational theories and theorists that support developmentally appropriate practice, including the works of theorists such as Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky, Montessori, Erikson, Gardner, Steiner, and the Reggio Emilia founders. See Appendix D.
- Learning approaches allow children to gauge their own learning through actual experience—projects, exploration, and interaction with their environment.
- Early childhood environmental educators are knowledgeable about theories of how children learn and what they need in their environment to support their learning.
- Learning activities are designed to accommodate all children.
- Children are provided with structured and unstructured opportunities for social interaction with other children and with adults.



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Infants and toddlers experience the world with all their senses, and the outdoors is a source of ever-changing sensory experiences. Well-designed outdoor spaces offer young toddlers, who are compelled to move, bountiful motor stimulation. Adults and caregivers should support this learning by giving children the words to help explain what they are experiencing.

- Positive experiences in and with nature are provided as a foundation for healthy development and a concern about the environment.

#### GUIDELINE 2.2—AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES

The developmentally appropriate program responds to children's needs to explore, discover, and discuss their experiences in the environment.

What to look for:

- Opportunities for exploring, respecting, and experimenting in nature are provided.
- Time for outdoor opportunities is provided throughout the day.
- Children are provided frequent opportunities throughout the year to experience the changes to the natural environment.
- The needs of diverse learners, including cultural and varying ability, are met when providing nature-related and play experiences.
- Opportunities are given for children to form and express their own environmental attitudes.
- Opportunities are provided for children to experience the different elements of the outdoors—textures, sounds, tastes, smells, and sights—on a regular basis.
- Tools and materials that the child can use to view the environment in different ways are provided. Examples include a magnifying glass, clear containers for viewing insects close up, or a viewfinder.
- The learning environment includes materials that can be used indoors or outdoors to allow children to express themselves about their experiences—paper, clipboards, crayons, pens, or puppets.
- Opportunities to climb, balance, crawl, jump, and lift using natural materials are provided.
- Opportunities to grow food plants or flowers, care for them, and watch them grow are provided and nurtured.

#### SPECIAL NEEDS

Federal and state legislation mandates that children with special needs be taught in the “least restrictive environment,” which for preschoolers would be with typically developing peers. The term “natural environments” in the legislation refers to settings that young children typically experience such as home, neighborhood, or preschool. “Natural areas” discussed in these guidelines refer to green outdoor areas. An awareness of a child’s special needs (strengths and challenges) can enable teachers and nonformal educators to adapt easily the settings, activities, and materials to include all children in early childhood environmental education programs.

### GUIDELINE 2.3—CHILD-DIRECTED AND INQUIRY-BASED

The developmentally appropriate program is child-directed and inquiry-based.

What to look for:

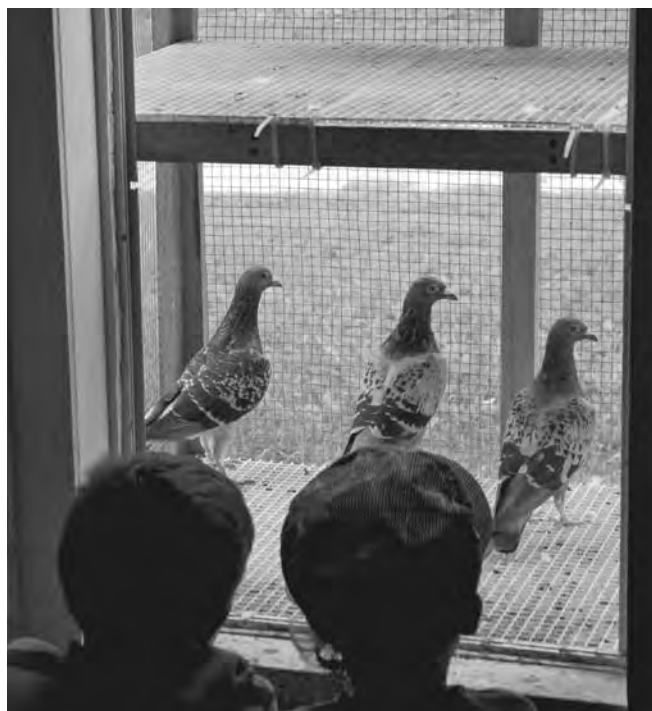
- Opportunities and time for children to follow their own interests are provided.
- Open-ended activities, choice, and hands-on learning focusing on process are provided.
- Taking materials outdoors or bringing natural materials inside to extend learning is integral to the program.
- Materials and activities provide children with an opportunity to begin to build inquiry skills. They may vary from child-directed to provider-directed, depending on the activity and the knowledge and experience of the provider and the children. For instance, the child may provide the question but have no context for developing a way to answer his or her own question.

### GUIDELINE 2.4—THE WHOLE CHILD

The developmentally appropriate program is planned with the whole child in mind.

What to look for:

- Educators establish a schedule and curriculum with preplanned activities that structure nature into all curricular areas, as well as meals and nap time, while maintaining flexibility to take advantage of teachable moments or the unplanned



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#### BRINGING THE OUTDOORS INSIDE

In many Waldorf classrooms, nature tables are used to bring nature inside. They also help students celebrate seasonal rhythms. A colored cloth is used to cover the tables and to suggest the different seasonal pastels for spring. Seasonal treasures such as leaves, nuts, flowers, and twigs are added to the table. Seasonal figures are also added for the children to play with. The figures can be handmade animals, mythical figures such as King Winter, or most any handcrafted item linked to the season. The children can play with items on the table and they can add things to the table. As the seasons change, the colors and objects on the table change.

#### CHILD-DIRECTED INQUIRY

Stephanie, Emma, and Amy discovered some caterpillars in the garden. They took turns holding them gently and then put them in a small jar. “What do they eat?” they asked a teacher. “We have a book in the classroom that will tell us. I’ll go get it,” she responded. When the teacher returned, the children had given the caterpillars a big drink—so big that they were floating and not moving. Alarmed, the children thought the caterpillars had died. The teacher helped them pour off the water and the caterpillars began to move again. The teacher explained that caterpillars only need little drinks because they are very little. Together they looked in a field guide and found that caterpillars are vegetarians—a word the children immediately understood because one of their classmates was a vegetarian. The children gathered bits of leaves to put in the jar. The teacher in this example was responsive to children’s interests and questions, and assisted them in finding information they wanted. The teacher helped them solve their floating caterpillar problem, using it as a teachable moment.

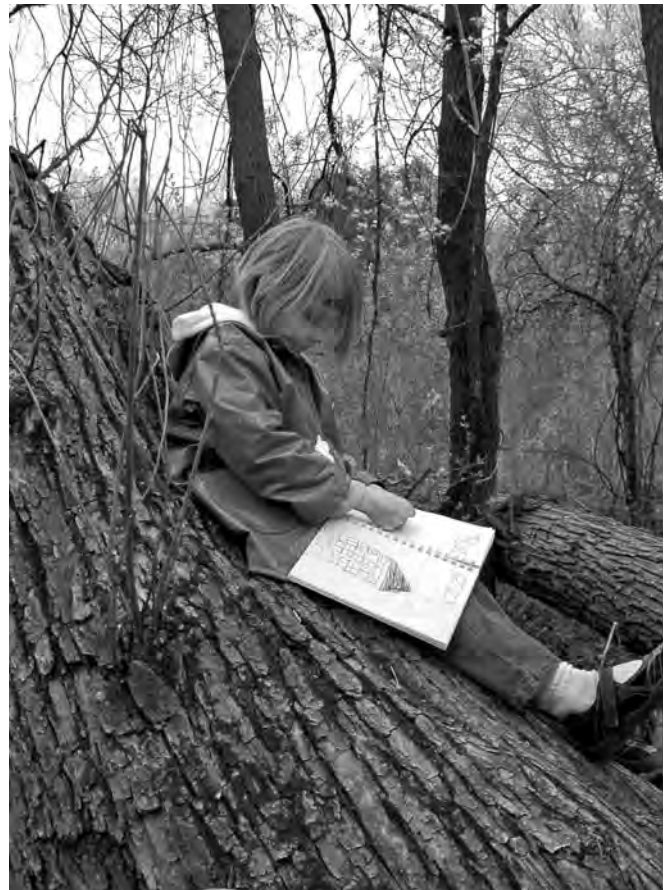


## CURIOSITY

Children often show that they are curious about many things. When adults observe carefully, they may see how to support their curiosity. Yanjie was attacking a snow bank with a scoop. The icy snow refused to be scooped so Yanjie headed for the woodchips which scooped well. She had other ideas—sand, then gravel. She returned to the snow—still no luck, then woodchips, sand, and gravel again. The teacher simply watched without interfering and mentally noted Yanjie’s curiosity, imagination, and persistence. If Yanjie had given up on scooping, the teacher might have described, “I see you were trying to scoop that crusty hard snow!” Yanjie might have answered in a way to give the teacher a clue for further conversation, such as “I want to make ice cream,” or she might have moved to some other project. Either way, the teacher followed Yanjie’s lead.

direction that children’s curiosity will take you as you follow their lead.

- Educators plan and provide activities that are focused on specific outcomes from a variety of developmental domains.
- Educators provide a variety of activities to address the different learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and individual capabilities of young children.



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- Educators are well prepared with developmentally appropriate guidance methods that include modeling of desired behaviors, setting limits, displaying appropriate expression and labeling of feelings, and teaching children how to be thoughtful and reflective.
- Educators encourage curiosity about and joy in nature.



## ASSESSING EXPERIENCES IN NATURE

Assessment of young children should be designed and implemented in a way that is appropriate for this age group. Young children communicate their knowledge in their own way and time. With infants and toddlers, their communication is primarily nonverbal, as they do not possess the vocabulary to express themselves yet. However, preschoolers can express their learning through drawing, building, writing, and sharing verbally with another child or adult. Documentation of learning can be managed by using a variety of different methods, such as teacher anecdotal notes, photographs, art projects, recordings, and journals. All of these materials should be placed in children's portfolios to show progress and growth over time.

## ASSESSMENT EXAMPLE

Excerpted from Environmental Experiences for Early Childhood (Project Learning Tree, 2010): Activity 4: WE ALL NEED TREES, p. 40.

Assessing the experiences

As you observe the children during the day, note the following:

- ◆ New vocabulary that the children are using in their conversations with you and one another. Are the children using new adjectives or combining words in new ways to describe smells or tastes?
- ◆ Questions that the children are asking. Do the questions show that the children are thinking about the sources of smells and tastes? Are they asking permission before tasting new things?
- ◆ Indications that the children's experiences have helped them form new ideas or refine old ideas. Are they willing, interested, or excited about smelling and tasting unfamiliar tree parts? Do they seek out new outdoor smells?



## KEY CHARACTERISTIC 3: PLAY AND EXPLORATION

GUIDELINE 3.1—USE OF THE NATURAL WORLD AND NATURAL MATERIALS

GUIDELINE 3.2—PLAY AND THE ROLE OF ADULTS

## Key Characteristic 3: Play and Exploration

**E**arly childhood environmental education programs ensure opportunities for nature-based play and exploration, both indoors and outdoors.

Play and exploration are natural, spontaneous acts in which all children engage. They are integral to the child's well-being, a fundamental way of learning, intrinsically motivating, and satisfying to the child. Play and exploration promote physical development, are soothing and reduce stress, and help to restore attention. While enjoyable in and of themselves, play and exploration also have tremendous potential for promoting creativity, helping children construct an understanding of their world, and facilitating learning in many different areas. Play and exploration in the outdoors and with natural materials indoors can help provide an important path to the development of understanding, compassion, and stewardship.



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### IMPORTANCE OF PLAY AND EXPLORATION

Play is the premier activity of the early childhood years. Children everywhere play frequently and spontaneously. Scholars, educators, and parents have focused on children's play since the inception of early childhood education, understanding play as a potential means to learning. Adults have provided toys, playground structures, games, costumes, and other materials to children, extending and supporting their creativity. Children, like all of us, find the purest, most enjoyable play in activities freely chosen, but will learn from and enjoy activities designed and chosen by their teachers, families, and even older children. Play can be thought of as occurring on a continuum from the child's choice to the adult's choice. Environmental education with its goals and objectives supplies such activities all along the continuum.

Environmental education for young children is particularly powerful because it involves children in the natural world that, according to Edward O. Wilson's "biophilia hypothesis," we all are born to love. Over the millennia, the natural world provided children with their first, and often only, toys. Still today, the play objects and places of the natural world compel many children. The interest and curiosity that young children typically show in plants, animals, water, clouds, rocks, and other natural phenomena are the basis for environmental educators' work. Children in various parts of the world will have different phenomena to notice and learn about—salaman-  
anders in the moist woodlands, lizards in the hot deserts—but everywhere the environmental educator can offer paths to pleasure, knowledge, understanding, compassion, and stewardship.

### GUIDELINE 3.1—USE OF THE NATURAL WORLD AND NATURAL MATERIALS

The natural world provides unlimited potential for play and exploration activities that will benefit the child's development.

What to look for:

- Play and exploration activities are built on appropriate theory and research.
- Opportunities for gross and fine motor development are provided.
- Appropriate rough and tumble play such as rolling down hillsides or tag in a natural setting

Exploration outdoors can be messy and dirty. It is important to have “exploring clothes” for the children. This honors many of the families who cannot wash or replace their child's clothes easily.

are included in the program to help children establish norms of appropriate social action and support cardiovascular health and counteract trends toward obesity in childhood.

- The need for safety and appropriate risk are balanced.
- Open-ended experiences are designed into the program through a variety of activities, including art, music, creative dramatics, and movement.
- Opportunities for creative play are provided.
- Opportunities are provided for children to choose the types of play in which to engage.
- Use of natural materials in indoor settings is encouraged to complement outdoor play and exploration.
- Recycled materials for play and exploration are provided.
- Time and guidance are provided to promote

### BENEFITS OF OUTDOOR PLAY

In *Playing Outdoors: Spaces and Places, Risks and Challenges* (2007, pp. 37–38), British researcher Helen Tovey writes, “Overall there is compelling evidence for the value of outdoor play in young children's lives and learning. It offers young children

- ♦ space and freedom to try things out
- ♦ an environment that can be acted on, changed, and transformed
- ♦ a dynamic, ever-changing environment that invites exploration, curiosity, and wonder
- ♦ whole-body, multisensory experience
- ♦ scope to combine materials in ways that are challenging and problematic
- ♦ opportunity to make connections in their learning
- ♦ a rich context for curiosity, wonder, mystery, and ‘what if’ thinking
- ♦ space to navigate and negotiate the social world of people, friendships, to experience disagreement and resolve conflicts with peers
- ♦ opportunity for giddy, gleeful, dizzy play
- ♦ potential for mastery, a willingness to take risks, and the skills to be safe
- ♦ a wide range of movement opportunities that are central to learning
- ♦ experience of the natural world and understanding of their own place in it
- ♦ opportunities for learning in all areas of the curriculum



appreciation and sharing of feelings about the order and beauty of nature.

- Independent play and social play are encouraged.
- Supplies, materials, language, ideas, and emotional support are provided that encourage discovery, and time is allowed for investigation.
- Children wear appropriate shoes, hats, other clothing, and sun protection.
- Group projects and activities are promoted to nurture curiosity, problem-solving skills, and discovery among children.



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## OUTDOOR PLAY FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS

Outdoor play provides learning opportunities for infants and toddlers that they cannot get elsewhere. Outdoor spaces enable children to learn new skills and explore the natural world. Children love to be outside, but child-care centers need appropriate areas in which infants and toddlers can play outdoors safely and frequently.

Because injuries can take place in outdoor play areas, safety is a major consideration. Three basic safety rules are as follows:

- ◆ Provide soft, level surfaces with good drainage. Grass is best for toddling and crawling; wood, mulch, or rubber mats work well under “fall zones.”
- ◆ Eliminate possibilities for entrapment.
- ◆ Provide watchful maintenance for items dangerous for babies to put in their mouths. Remove items that are a choking hazard.
- ◆ Other considerations:
  - ◇ Licensing laws may require infants and toddlers to have outdoor play areas separate from those for older children; however, when possible design these spaces so all children can see one another.
  - ◇ Equipment should be developmentally appropriate for infants, toddlers, and infants and toddlers with disabilities.
  - ◇ Ensure that adults—staff members and parents—understand that babies are active learners who can endure the bumps and spills of childhood.
  - ◇ Make sure that a drinking fountain is available. A nonskid surface should be placed below the fountain.
  - ◇ Provide appropriate shade for adults and children (e.g., trees, awnings, umbrellas, lean-tos, pop-up tents, gazebos).
  - ◇ For mobile toddlers, provide outdoor features that include slightly uneven grassy areas, tunnels, movable parts, very low platforms, half-buried tires, ladders, commercial climbers.
  - ◇ Provide visual and auditory stimulation for infants outdoors by including framing structures, mirrors, wind chimes, and gongs.
  - ◇ For the adults, consider providing benches, gliders, hammocks, quilts, and pillows, and a portable changing area.



### GUIDELINE 3.2—PLAY AND THE ROLE OF ADULTS

Adults, including formal and nonformal educators, parents, and caregivers, provide the context and supervision that maximize the learning and development possibilities from play and exploration.

What to look for:

- Time is allowed for investigation, exploration, creativity, and discovery.
- Materials, language, ideas, and emotional support for possible investigation are provided.

### COMMON BARRIERS PREVENTING OUTDOOR EXPLORATION

- ◆ Some neighborhoods and school playgrounds lack natural spaces.
- ◆ Transportation to natural areas may be costly or difficult to arrange.
- ◆ Parents and administrators may fear for the health and safety of children relating to nature directly or because of the dangers in neighborhoods.
- ◆ Some medications can cause severe allergic reactions to sun, insect bites, etc.
- ◆ Children with physical disabilities may not be able to explore independently. It is important to have moveable soft areas such as a variety of outdoor blankets, mats, and wedges. Wheelchairs with large tires can roll on uneven and soft surfaces such as sand or moist ground.
- ◆ Children with sensory integration disorders can become overwhelmed by natural elements such as bright sunlight, wind ruffling hair and clothing, aromas, and skin contact with varying textures. Slow-paced, repetitive exposure in the least intrusive fashion can strengthen the child's coping abilities.
- ◆ The perception that parents do not want their children to get dirty.

### TAKING PRODUCTIVE AND SAFE WALKS

Often educators are concerned about keeping children together outdoors in order to keep them safe, away from streets, and to prevent them from getting lost. These are all valid concerns, and as you take children to familiar outdoor places more frequently and set boundaries for them, they will respect those boundaries and have a safe experience.

- ◆ A first consideration is to choose an outdoor place that offers interesting opportunities for exploration. A child whose attention is engaged is less likely to wander. Know that if you go to a wide-open space, children will want to run—and that's a good thing! You may want to begin your outdoor time by having children run and move like animals from a specific point (a tree) to another point (a light post) or around the perimeter of the boundary.
- ◆ After children have had ample time to move, gather them together and remind them of their boundaries: "Remember that we need to stay between the pine trees and the sidewalk." When taking walks use a "buddy system" and if possible, have an adult in front and in back of the group of children.

- Feelings and knowledge about the order and beauty of nature are shared and appreciated.
- The physical context of the children's play is improved in an obvious and visible way by adding plants, interesting events, structures, and so forth.
- The child's imaginative responses to or interpretations of the natural world—for instance, "the moon is following me"—is recognized and acknowledged, and the poetry, cognitive linking, and neuron-formation that such responses represent are understood.
- The child's safety or well-being is a prime consideration at all times; speedy intervention to ensure safety when children are at risk and alternatives for safe play are provided.
- The standards of developmentally appropriate practice are actively considered and employed.
- Adults integrate cultural contexts and significance in the learning environment.
- Adults provide culturally relevant materials and artifacts in promoting learning through play, and the items used model appropriate respect for these resources.



SHEILA WILLIAMS RIDGE

### THE ADULT'S ROLE IN FOSTERING OUTDOOR PLAY

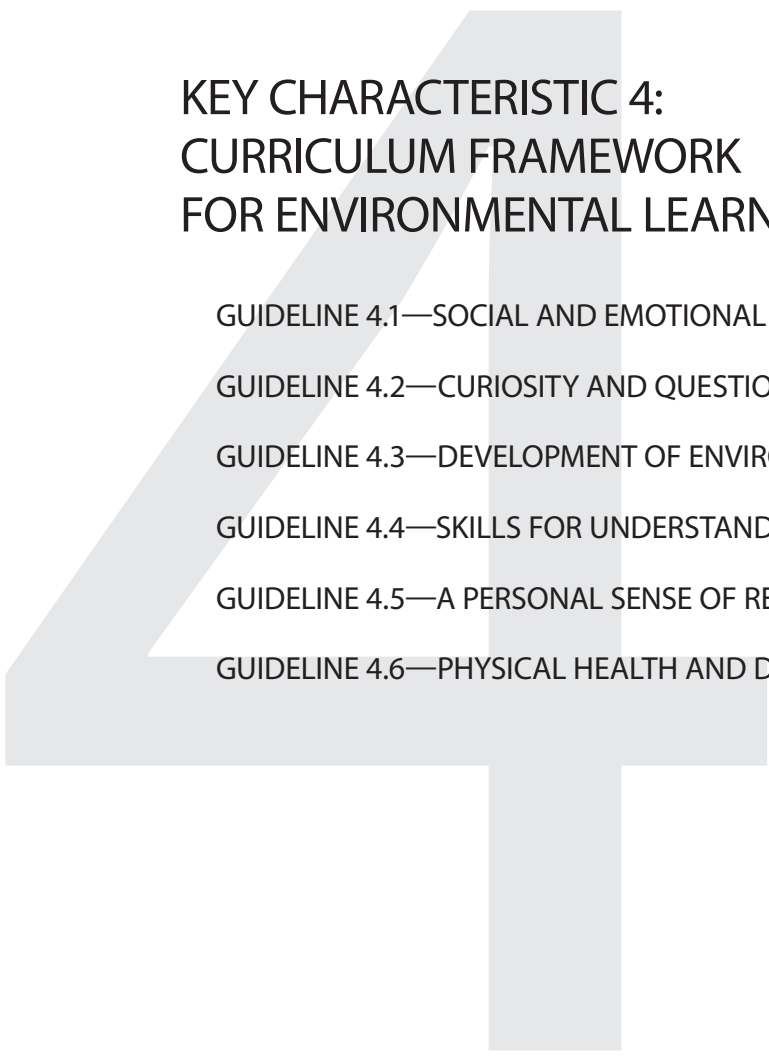
Good environmental education should be ubiquitous. For example, a parent and toddler are walking on a sidewalk, and the child notices a little cluster of pebbles at the base of a driveway. The parent waits and lets the child explore, supplying a few new words perhaps. The child runs up an inviting path—someone's front walk, to be sure—and the parent again stops and welcomes the child back with "what did you find?" Context is important in early environmental education. Educational materials are everywhere to stimulate and enrich curiosity. The adult role is that of a facilitator, one who nurtures the sense of wonder in children.

### WHAT'S THE RISK OF NO RISK?

"Keeping children safe is paramount to the work we do every minute when we are with children. We must always stop or prevent situations that threaten children's well-being. But when we do intervene on behalf of children's safety, we can do it with the understanding that life has many challenges and risks, and children deserve experiences and tools to learn to negotiate on their own. The saying 'With few risks there are few rewards' is very true. Learning involves risk. Relationships involve risk. Feeling competent and confident in the world requires meeting a challenge and working to overcome it.

When children are involved in a situation we think is too risky or dangerous, rather than just stopping them we can offer alternatives that keep them safe while preserving opportunities for them to develop to their fullest potential. This work requires that we pay attention to the children's perspectives, use our power thoughtfully, and act responsibly. We can ensure that children have a childhood where they feel exhilaration, while still being protected and supported by adults and their friends. We can support them in learning that determination pays off, and they can become competent decision-makers, able to assess risks, contribute to the well-being of others, and reap the rewards of their efforts."

—Deb Curtis ("What's the Risk of No Risk?" Exchange Magazine, March/April 2010, p. 56)



## KEY CHARACTERISTIC 4: CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK FOR ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING

GUIDELINE 4.1—SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL GROWTH

GUIDELINE 4.2—CURIOSITY AND QUESTIONING

GUIDELINE 4.3—DEVELOPMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL UNDERSTANDINGS

GUIDELINE 4.4—SKILLS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE ENVIRONMENT

GUIDELINE 4.5—A PERSONAL SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND CARING

GUIDELINE 4.6—PHYSICAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT



## Key Characteristic 4: Curriculum Framework for Environmental Learning

**Y**oung children are provided opportunities to explore their environment and develop knowledge and skills. Through the use of an environmental learning curriculum framework, educators intentionally foster growth and development across social-emotional, cognitive, physical, and language domains. This learning will lead, as the child matures into adulthood, to environmental literacy.



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### GUIDELINES 4.1—SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL GROWTH

Young children build their knowledge of self and other people around them through active participation and experience. Early-learner programs provide opportunities for young children to participate in a variety of social interactions, including play and exploration in the outdoors that allow them to grow as contributing members of their community.

#### NOTES

The curriculum framework should be designed and implemented to be consistent with developmentally appropriate practices. Please refer to Key Characteristic 2 for more information.

Many of the ideas for the curriculum framework were adapted from the following documents:

Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines: Connecting Children to Nature (Nebraska Department of Education Early Childhood Training Center, 2008). Retrieved from [www.education.ne.gov/oec/pubs/ELG/nature\\_education.pdf](http://www.education.ne.gov/oec/pubs/ELG/nature_education.pdf).

Excellence in Environmental Education: Guidelines for Learning (K–12) (Washington, D.C.: North American Association for Environmental Education, 2010).

The Head Start Path to Positive Outcomes (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families—Head Start Program, 2003).

### NONFORMAL ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

Environmental education programming is often designed and implemented by government agencies and non-profit organizations such as nature centers, zoos, wildlife rehabilitation programs, and conservation organizations. Many of these groups have active programs that focus on youth through relationships with K–12 schools. Working with older children is fundamentally different from working with young learners; using a simplified version of the K–12 programs should be avoided.

By becoming familiar with this curriculum framework and developmentally appropriate practice, nonformal educators can recognize the unique characteristics of the early childhood learner. This age group brings a fresh, uninhibited zest for interacting with the natural world, and envious energy and passion for play and exploration. Successful educators bring themselves to the young child's world, meet the Earth on their terms, see nature through their eyes, and enjoy the journey!



#### What to look for:

- Opportunities and experiences are provided for the child to learn about self-concept and control so that children may
  - have confidence and pride in their abilities; express feelings, needs, and opinions appropriately about others and the environment
  - increasingly demonstrate the ability to follow rules and routines and use materials responsibly
  - develop growing understanding of how their actions affect others and the environment
  - begin to accept the consequences of their actions
- become more comfortable with unfamiliar surroundings and experiences
- A sense of community is promoted so that children may
  - express understanding and respect for differences among people regarding ethnicity, gender, age, abilities, and family structures
  - respect the rights and feelings of others
  - engage in activities that promote a sense of contribution such as planting seeds in a vegetable garden, recycling paper, or turning off lights when leaving a room
  - develop a sense of connectedness through the exploration of natural materials, tactile exploration, caring for plants or animals, and so forth
  - develop cooperation skills in playing and exploring nature with others
  - demonstrate a developing sense of respect for nature, the environment, and its components
  - express an increasing appreciation and affinity for nature
  - increasingly play cooperatively and work collaboratively with others

#### GUIDELINE 4.2—CURIOSITY AND QUESTIONING

Young children learn about their environment in a mixture of ways. Much of this learning takes place through direct experiences, exploration, and discovery. Early learning programs provide children with opportunities to develop curiosity, ask their own questions, and begin to develop reasoning and problem-solving skills.

### SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Social-emotional development refers to social competencies such as empathy, communication, and cooperation as well as intrapersonal processes such as emotion recognition, coping with emotions, and regulating emotion and behavior to match the demands of the context. These developmental domains are often discussed together because they are so intertwined; for example, it is necessary to perceive accurately another's emotional state in order to feel empathy and behave in a socially positive manner. In addition, developing positive emotional dispositions provide a foundation for good mental health.

What to look for:

- Initiative and curiosity are encouraged, so that children may
  - explore a range of natural materials using their senses
  - choose to participate in an increasing array of environmental explorations
- approach environmental explorations with increased flexibility, imagination, and inventiveness
- experience surprise and delight through their environmental explorations
- develop a curiosity about cause and effect, life cycle, and reasoning

## EXPLORING VARIETY IN THE ENVIRONMENT

Excerpted from *Environmental Experiences for Early Childhood* (Project Learning Tree, 2010, p. 20):

### Activity 1: Shape of Things

Featured experience—shape walk

**Materials.** Labeled shapes cut from paper (with younger children, use circles, squares, and triangles; with older children, add hearts, ovals, and stars); hole punch; yarn or pipe cleaners.

Before the activity, make “shape necklaces” by cutting out shapes from construction paper. Print the name of the shape on each cutout and punch a hole in each.

Hold up each shape in turn and ask the children to identify it.

Ask: “Do you see anything in our classroom that is this shape?”

Give each child one of each shape, and show how to string the shapes on yarn (or pipe cleaners) to make necklaces or bracelets. You could also consider starting with just one shape and adding more shapes over time.

Take a short walk outside to look for shapes. When you see an object that looks like one of the children’s shapes, hold up the appropriate cutout and say, “I spy something shaped like a \_\_\_\_.” Encourage the children to look for that particular shape in nature. Repeat with the other shapes. Encourage the children to look for shapes on their own and say, “I spy something shaped like a \_\_\_\_.” With very young children, add colors to the descriptions (e.g., I spy something that is yellow and is shaped like a \_\_\_\_).

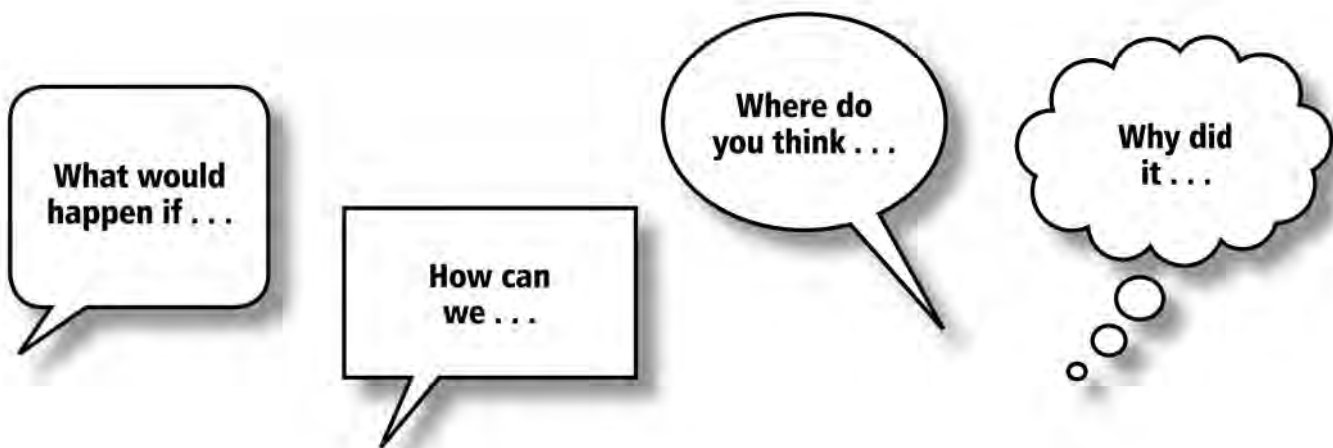
When you return to the classroom, hold up each cutout shape in turn. Ask: “What did you see outside shaped like a \_\_\_\_? Which shapes did you see the most? Which shapes are your favorites?”

## USING THE SENSES

A kindergarten teacher wanted to emphasize the environment by having the children use their senses to better understand their surroundings. She wanted to focus on how there were different textures such as tree bark, flower petals, and rocks in nature. The teacher also felt it was important to have the students closely observe color, shapes, repetition, movement, and balance within the environment. The students began their outdoor walk by focusing on touch and sight to explore their surroundings. The children touched tree bark, stones, leaves, flowers, soil, and twigs, observing how they were similar or different in color, texture, and shape. One of the children saw a spider’s web and wanted to touch it. The teacher explained that touching it would break the web, as it was very delicate. The class closely observed the intricate nature of the web but left it untouched. Back in the classroom, the children reviewed the trip, studied the photographs taken along the way, and made plans for their next walk.



- Questioning by the child is encouraged and supported, so that children may
  - ask questions about environmental components and phenomena
  - probe for answers to questions through active investigation and use of reference or picture books
  - discuss or document through drawing or writing what is learned through environmental investigations and explorations
- Opportunities for children to practice reasoning and problem-solving are provided so they may
  - use natural materials to remember patterns and to classify, compare, and contrast shape, size, and color
  - demonstrate increasing ability to predict possible outcomes as a result of environmental explorations
  - seek more than one solution to a question, task, or problem related to nature and the environment around them
  - try alternative methods to solve a problem but request help from a resource, an adult, or a child when necessary
  - use observations in making predictions and formulating theories about the environment



## ELEMENTARY GLOBE

The Teacher's Implementation Guide (Hatheway, B, Gallagher, S. and Henderson, S., University Corporation for Atmospheric Research, 2006) designed to accompany the Elementary Globe program, includes a list of skills that young students need to help them understand the scientific process. Teachers are encouraged to use the terms in the skills checklist with their students and to point out how the students are using the same processes that scientists use. The checklist format helps the teacher see how the students are using different inquiry skills as they participate in activities. By referring to the checklist and discussing investigative skills that the children are using, teachers will help the students become better prepared to understand and use such observational and inquiry skills in their everyday life.

The skills noted in the check list are observing, questioning, sequencing, patterning, counting, measuring, comparing, classifying, defining, communicating, hypothesizing, predicting, inferring, recording, and reporting. Not all of these skills will be included in activities for early childhood education, but many will.



#### GUIDELINE 4.3—DEVELOPMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL UNDERSTANDINGS

As children explore their environment, they begin to develop understandings of how the world works. Early learning programs provide children with opportunities to develop knowledge related to environmental and social systems, including the place where they live.

What to look for:

- Opportunities to observe and understand earth systems are provided so children may
  - observe and discuss changes in the environment, including weather and seasonal changes
  - investigate properties of rocks, soil, and water
  - express through talk, movement, and art their observations of the sun, moon, stars, and clouds
  - learn and understand the importance of natural resources and that the environment provides for the needs of people
  - notice and describe local environmental changes such as erosion and water flow
- Opportunities are provided to observe and understand the living environment so children may
  - understand that animals need many of the same things from the environment that we do
  - explore the nature of life through interactions with a variety of plants, animals, and fungi
  - recognize the differences between living and nonliving things
  - notice changes in living things over time
  - understand that plants and animals have life cycles
  - notice and ask questions about similarities and differences and categories of plants and animals, as well as appearances, behaviors, and habitats
  - notice and ask questions about growth and change in plants and animals, such as changes in the garden, life cycle of classroom animals, or a caterpillar changing into a butterfly
- Interactions with individuals, groups, and culture are provided so children may
  - appreciate similarities and differences of personal characteristics among people
  - appreciate one's own culture and others' cultures
  - be aware of his or her role as a member of a group, such as the family or the class
  - contribute to discussions about things that everyone needs (food, water, shelter, and clothing) and show awareness that people work to provide the things others need

#### ENCOURAGING INVESTIGATION

Young children are developing the skills necessary to investigate both their built and natural environments. Educators support the development of curiosity and questioning skills by integrating supportive experiences into the curriculum. Children's individual learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and comfort with sharing information are considered as well by educators as they design learning opportunities. Educators use the young child's investigations to provide bridges to other areas of the curriculum such as mathematics, science, social studies, art, and literacy.

For example, a child noticed something in the environment and wanted to share that observation with peers. The educator supported further investigation by encouraging the child to draw a picture. The educator helped the child develop vocabulary related to the investigation, and helped her share the information with peers.



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## HOW AN ANTHILL WORKS

An excerpt from the activity “Ants on Parade” in the Growing Up Wild program (Council for Environmental Education, 2010).

Warm up. Begin by asking children if they’ve ever seen an ant before. How did they know it was an ant? What did it look like? What did it do? Where was it? Draw an ant based on the children’s descriptions and record other information they provide.

Tell children they will be scientists and study ants.

Procedure. Show children your collection of food items. Which foods would ants most like to eat? Why do you think so? What we think will happen is our hypothesis. Let’s test our hypothesis. Place students’ choices of food items in each section of a paper plate or plates.

Take the children outdoors for an “ant hunt.” Look for an anthill or free-roaming ants on the sidewalk, under rocks, etc.

When you find ants or an anthill, place the plates of food nearby. Allow time for ants to locate the food. This is our test. As children wait, encourage them to observe ants and their behavior (and/or allow free play). What do ant bodies look like? How does the ants’ behavior change when they discover the food? Count the ants as they arrive at the different foods. To record results, make tally marks next to each food name on a sheet of paper. This is our data.

Encourage children to share ideas and observations about ants. Discuss what foods the ants ate. Graph the results. Was our hypothesis correct? Based on the graph, which food do ants most like to eat? This is our conclusion. (Sometimes tests don’t give clear results. Real scientists test their hypothesis multiple times, and, if results aren’t clear, refine testing procedures.)

Read a story that realistically portrays the natural history of ants. How do your outdoor observations support the information found in the books?

- participate in group decision-making related to spending time in nature, care of classroom animals and plants, and use of natural resources in the classroom
- An emphasis on developing the child's sense of place is included so that children may
  - become aware of characteristics of the place where they live and of other places
  - notice how objects are spatially related to one another (e.g., far or near)
  - identify location and direction
  - consult the atlas, with the assistance of an adult, to learn the location of their city or neighborhood
  - develop a beginning understanding of maps as representations of actual places
  - learn how things, people, and places change over time
- predict how events today or in the recent past will affect the near future, such as connecting a hard rain to the appearance of puddles
- use blocks, clay, natural materials, or other items to recreate aspects of the environment
- create a simple map or illustration of the home, classroom, school, or neighborhood

#### GUIDELINE 4.4—SKILLS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE ENVIRONMENT

Young children increasingly develop their ability to investigate, analyze, and respond to environmental changes, situations, and concerns. Early learning programs provide opportunities for children to experience a variety of environmental conditions and encourage them to investigate topics of their own choosing. These investigations may, when appropriate, lead to the development of action strategies.

### PLANTING DANCE AND A THREE SISTERS GARDEN

Movement and music are powerful tools in working with young children. Educators can support rich learning and understanding of natural environments and cultures by weaving in traditional music and dance.

For example, a group of young children wanted to grow some vegetables in a dirt area along a fence. The educator supported their interest by offering the opportunity for the children to plant a three sisters garden that is traditional among many Native American peoples. The children participated in the corn-planting dance that weaves basic planting principles, cultural respect for wildlife, and elements of interdependence. Because of the movement and music opportunity, children were continuing to repeat the dance and celebrate the garden through harvest.

A three sisters garden consists of corn, beans, and squash. These plants, when grown together, support and nourish each other and provide a much more efficient way of cultivating these crops than if they were planted separately. Corn, planted a few weeks ahead of the beans and squash, becomes the support on which the bean vines grow. The low-growing squash's wide leaves prevent weeds from growing around the plants and help retain soil moisture. The beans fix nitrogen in the soil, benefiting all three plants.

For more information on three sisters gardens:

The Three Sisters Cookbook, a project of the Oneida Indian Nation health department: [www.oneidaindiannation.com/home/content/81144837.html](http://www.oneidaindiannation.com/home/content/81144837.html).

Creating a Three Sisters Garden: Discovering A Native Trio from the National Gardening Association's Growing Ideas Classroom Projects: [www.kidsgardening.com/growingideas/PROJECTS/MARCH02/mar02-pg1.htm](http://www.kidsgardening.com/growingideas/PROJECTS/MARCH02/mar02-pg1.htm)

Caduto, M., and Bruchac, J. Native American Gardening: Stories, Projects, and Recipes for Families (Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 1996).

What to look for:

- Opportunities for children to observe, investigate, and analyze are provided so that they may
  - use their senses to observe their environment and notice changes
  - discuss differences and make comparisons
  - understand the sequence of events
  - link new ideas to past experiences
  - ask questions about an environmental situation or concern
  - locate resources, with adult assistance, which will help them learn more about the topic of their environmental investigation
- Opportunities are provided that help children develop abilities to collect, describe, and record information, so children may
  - make decisions, with adult support, about how to collect information for their investigation
  - collect a variety of information using tools such as tweezers, jars, cameras, paper, and drawings
  - demonstrate an increased ability to collect information and record differences over time
  - make predictions and draw conclusions based on information collected from their environmental investigations

## SENSE OF PLACE

What does “home” mean to you? Children need to have a sense of belonging in their world. This sense of belonging is first rooted within attachment relationships and family, but extends to a sense of place in the world when children develop an intimate connection with the natural and built environment. When children come to love a place, they want to learn about it and protect it. This love can extend, as children grow, to finding a sense of place within our Earth home.

“Home” takes many different forms for children in the U.S.: urban, rural, suburban, desert, forest, prairie, mountains, wetlands, watershed, or seaside. Educators in different regions can support children’s developing sense of place by bringing their bioregion into the classroom or program and by providing as much contact as possible with local nature outside the classroom, in the schoolyard, and beyond.

This is much easier in some places than others. Programs with natural, outdoor play spaces or access to nearby natural areas will find this to be fairly easy, while programs with limited nearby natural spaces may have some difficulty providing sufficient experiences with nature. A child care teacher in downtown Seattle has worked out “a pedagogy for ecology” with her children, in which they repeatedly visit the same neighborhood place, noting changes, being sensitive to problems, and learning the history. Children come to love the place because they know it well (Pelo, 2009).

Programs in neighborhoods that are not safe, however, will need to be very creative in finding ways to bring nature to children and children to nature. Natural materials can be brought into the classroom—leaves and seeds to sort and classify, a worm bin to compost food waste and study life cycles, or container gardens can provide direct experiences with nature for children. Children’s literature (e.g., *The Great Kapok Tree*, *Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain*, *Wangari’s Trees of Peace*) provides another opportunity for children to learn about and experience nature.

The Reggio Emilia project “The City in the Rain” is a good example of how preschool children in an urban setting studied how the city and people changed when it rained (Edwards, Gandini, and Foreman, 1998). It is also helpful to think about how people are part of nature and how we are interdependent with our environments: We all breathe air, drink water, eat food, and experience sunlight and shadows. Educators can capitalize on these universal human experiences to support children as they build connections and find their sense of place in the world.



- communicate the results of their environmental investigation, with adult support, and share the information with peers
- Structure and opportunity are provided to help



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children work with flexibility, creativity and openness, so that children may

- express thoughts in a variety of ways—movement, linguistic, graphics, and so forth
- show increasing confidence and comfort in using vocabulary, sharing representations, and accepting new ideas and feedback from others about their environmental investigations
- discuss different perspectives with peers and adults
- acknowledge differences of opinion
- make a plan of action to address the environmental situation or concern, as appropriate for their developmental level

#### GUIDELINE 4.5—A PERSONAL SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND CARING

As young children develop empathy and increased self-reliance, they demonstrate a sense of personal responsibility toward others and their environment. Early learning programs model environmentally responsible actions and provide opportunities for children to make decisions about their own activities.

### ELEMENTARY GLOBE

Elementary Globe is a series of five storybooks designed to help K–4 teachers integrate Earth science into their curriculum. Each book focuses on a different Earth science topic as the main characters—Simon, Anita, and Dennis—explore the natural world. The five books are *All About Earth: Our World on Stage*, *Do You Know That Clouds Have Names?*, *The Scoop on Soils*, *Discoveries at Willow Creek*, and *The Mystery of the Missing Hummingbirds*. Each book includes three learning activities and supports the teacher by providing scientific background information and a glossary. A teacher implementation guide that provides suggestions for use at different grade levels is also available.

### OBSERVATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

After it rains, take the children outside to experience the environment. Have the children talk about what it smells like, feels like, and looks like. Ask them to make a hypothesis about where the rain has gone, and listen to their responses. Ask them to look for droplets on a leaf or a blade of grass and to notice when some surfaces have none. As the children continue with their inquiry, provide them with cups of water and an eyedropper so they can re-create raindrops falling on the different surfaces, and explore what naturally happens in nature when it rains. Watch as they develop their sense of wonder.



ARBOR DAY FOUNDATION

Connect outdoor experiences with emerging literacy through books, songs, finger plays, language experience stories, and bookmaking with photos taken of children interacting outdoors.

What to look for:

- Opportunities are provided for extensive positive interactions with nature, so that children may
  - express openness for experiences in the outdoors
  - initiate investigations of natural phenomena
  - display respect for nature
  - demonstrate pride in care of and for living things
- Opportunities to participate in social interaction and to learn appropriate social roles are provided so that children may
  - investigate and understand their personal place in the natural world
  - engage in meaningful conversations reflective of experiences with nature and the environment
  - communicate feelings about their place and the local environment
  - recognize when they have impact on others and the environment
  - indicate a desire to learn about nature
  - display an understanding of the causes of various natural phenomena
  - share experiences with nature through communication and celebration with others
  - show understanding of how individuals work together to achieve group goals
  - show beginning understanding of how human activities may change the environment

## ENCOURAGING OBSERVATION

Young children require ample exposure, over time, to observe their environment and identify changes. Children will begin to discuss their observations with educators and peers, and with adult support, develop the vocabulary to express their thoughts. They may ask questions that will help them frame further investigation of an environmental situation. Educators will support children in the discussion of natural processes and help children build a foundation of “normal” or “typical.”

For example, on the playground, a child observes that one of the trees is still without leaves even though it is summer. The child asks questions about the health of the tree. With the support of the educator, the child may make further observations, discuss what is normal and how this is different, research types of trees or the role of the tree in the environment even if it is no longer living. The child may also make a plan to replace, remove, or celebrate the tree with his or her peers.

- talk about how people can protect or harm the environment
- make individual choices about participation in efforts to protect the environment, such as not littering, picking up trash, saving paper to be recycled
- participate in group decision-making about classroom environmental actions, such as use of water, turning off lights when not in use, recycling
- show a beginning understanding of what people need to do to work and live together in groups
- recognize that others have an impact on nature



#### GUIDELINE 4.6—PHYSICAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Young children connect to the world through their bodies, developing motor skills and healthy habits. Early learning programs provide young children with a wide variety of physically challenging experiences, including opportunities to run, jump, and climb in the natural environment. Early learning programs also provide young children with opportunities to explore ways they can improve their own health.

#### What to look for:

- Children are provided with a variety of opportunities to develop fine motor skills such as
  - using tools and toys to explore their natural environment (e.g., magnifying glass, hand trowel, sifter, nets, and tweezers)
  - artistically expressing experiences in nature (e.g., tree and leaf rubbings, weaving through tree limbs, easel painting) to develop hand-eye coordination

#### EXAMPLES OF GREEN CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

- ◆ Worm bins for composting classroom food scraps
- ◆ Outside areas for composting natural materials (leaves, garden materials, etc.)
- ◆ Reusable dishes and cloth napkins
- ◆ Recycle bins in the classroom—easily labeled bins with words and pictures provide literacy experiences while recycling
- ◆ Paint directly on easels
- ◆ Provide recycled materials for art projects
- ◆ Turn off lights when exiting a room to conserve energy
- ◆ Turn off faucets when not in use to conserve water
- ◆ Examples of sustainable living materials such as cloth bags and empty healthy food boxes in the dramatic play area

### BUILDING A WORM BED (DODGE NATURE CENTER PRESCHOOL, 2005)

A worm bin container provides air, drainage, and space for worms and compost materials. Start with an appropriate container; add red wiggler worms, shredded newspaper or used copy paper, some soil, moisture, and food. Food should include fruit and vegetable scraps. (Meat, dairy, and bread will not work well.) The worm bin will not smell bad and will provide compost for plants and worms for feeding pets, birds, or just exploration.

- increasing spatial awareness through appropriate activities
- exploring textures and manipulating materials in the natural setting
- building two- and three-dimensional structures in the outdoor environment
- engaging in sensory exploration of the environment, especially through interactions with water, soil, and plant materials
- Children are provided with a variety of opportunities to develop gross motor skills such as
  - expressing the sounds of nature through movement and dance (e.g., wind, rain, falling leaves, animals)
  - using garden tools to improve strength and coordination
  - engaging in games and outdoor play activities that enhance physical wellness, balance, and coordination
  - manipulating and combining a variety of natural and human-manufactured materials to enhance play



### INTEGRATING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION WITH MATH AND MUSIC

For primary-aged children, simple arithmetic can be used when counting the number of flowers on a plant, or estimating the number of trees in a wooded area, or the amount of fruit being produced by a grove of apple trees. Gathering data by measuring, counting, or performing simple experiments will help children gain skills in statistical analysis. These exercises can be kept simple: for instance, children can count the number of different birds that come to a birdfeeder. This data may be used to construct a bar graph or pictogram that highlights bird types and number of birds at the feeder.

Using the sounds of nature, such as crashing waves on the shore, the tapping of a woodpecker, the songs of birds, or the wind rustling tree leaves, will help children see music as something broader than the music created by humans with musical instruments. Have the children use natural objects such as rocks, sticks, sand, or seed-pods to create different musical sounds. They can combine the sounds to create a concert. Different orchestral instruments mimic sounds in nature, e.g., flute = bird, harp = flowing water, maracas = water hitting rocks, and so forth. The children can experiment to see which instruments mimic sounds in nature or they can create new instruments that relate to the ocean, birds singing, or backyard sounds.



- The environment is used to promote children's health and fitness, so they may
  - understand that all animals, including humans, need air, water, space, and food to live
  - become aware that nutritious foods give us energy and help people to grow
  - identify healthy and nonhealthy foods and be willing to try new, healthy foods
  - participate in vegetable gardening
  - show increasing balance and strength in activities such as walking, running, and climbing on uneven surfaces such as hills, trails, depressions, and tree trunks
  - become aware that our bodies need adequate rest and sleep to reenergize and grow healthy
  - choose challenging new physical activities in the natural environment
- be able to follow basic health and safety rules, especially when playing and exploring outdoors



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## ENHANCING MOTOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Motor skills are defined as a continuous series of purposeful movements. Fine motor skills such as grasping and hand-eye coordination involve small muscles, and gross motor skills such as skipping, balancing, walking, throwing, and catching involve large muscles. Physical development is a key domain for early childhood and is crucial to learning, as physical movement facilitates visual-spatial awareness and encoding of information.

## MOVEMENT AND MOTOR SKILLS

Excerpted from *Environmental Experiences for Early Childhood* (Project Learning Tree, 2010, p. 22):

### Activity 1: Dance with Leaves

**Materials:** Leaves from neighborhood trees (laminated for durability) or the leaf shape examples found at [www.plt.org](http://www.plt.org); track 1 on Project Learning Tree's *Environmental Experiences for Early Childhood* CD.

Hold up a leaf shape. Ask: "How could you use your body to make this shape? Can you make this shape with your whole body? With your fingers? While you are sitting? While you are standing?" Repeat this process with the other leaf shapes.

Ask the children to scatter the leaves around the play area and to stand among them. Tell the children they will be listening and moving to music. Play track 1 on the CD. When the music starts, encourage the children to use the rhythm of the music as their movement guide, or invite the children to move around the area like an animal (for example, scurry like a chipmunk, fly like a robin, or walk like an ant). When the music stops at the end of each segment, pause the CD. Each child should find a leaf shape to stand on and create the shape with his or her body. Repeat the process for each music segment on track 1.



## KEY CHARACTERISTIC 5: PLACES AND SPACES

GUIDELINE 5.1—SPACES AND PLACES TO ENHANCE DEVELOPMENT

GUIDELINE 5.2—NATURAL COMPONENTS

GUIDELINE 5.3—COMFORTABLE FOR BOTH CHILDREN AND ADULTS

GUIDELINE 5.4—MAINTENANCE AND USABILITY

GUIDELINE 5.5—HEALTH, SAFETY, AND RISK

GUIDELINE 5.6—ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

## Key Characteristic 5: Places and Spaces

**E**arly childhood environmental education programs provide places and spaces, both indoors and out, that are safe, enticing, comfortable, and enhance learning and development across all learning domains.

“Beauty and surprise should be the basis of every child’s environment—every direction a child looks at should be filled with materials and structures that inspire curiosity and delight”

—Rusty Keeler’s *Natural Playscapes: Creating Outdoor Play Environments for the Soul* (Exchange Press, 2008, p. 51)

### GUIDELINE 5.1—SPACES AND PLACES TO ENHANCE DEVELOPMENT

Indoor and outdoor places and spaces provide opportunities for development across social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development domains.



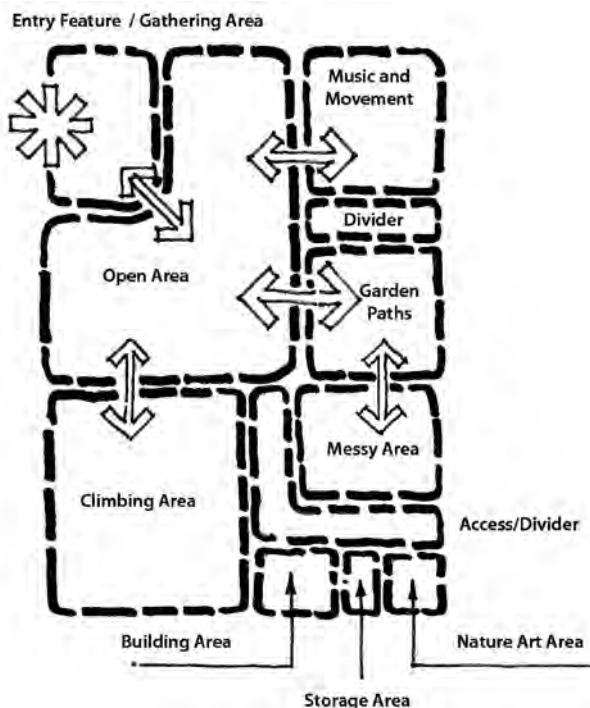
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What to look for:

- Natural components on which to climb, balance, crawl through, jump on and off, lift, and move in other special ways are available.
- Developmentally appropriate tools to observe, manipulate, collect, and construct are provided.

### OUTDOOR ROOMS

Children need order, especially children who are visual-spatial thinkers and children who have sensory integration challenges. Dividing outdoor space into separate “rooms” can provide quiet and loud areas, busy and slow areas, or crowded or roomy areas. By providing clearly defined activity areas, children are given the opportunity to make choices and plans on their own. These separate activity areas decrease conflicts among children and increase a child’s ability to focus on learning activities. For example, one way to increase the participation of children who might be unsure of the outdoors is to allow them to bring toys outside with them that can be included in play activities. This diagram shows just one example of an outdoor space that has been divided into areas. Plans should be customized to fit the unique features of each space.



The diagram is from the *Learning with Nature Idea Book* by Arbor Day Foundation and Dimensions Educational Research Foundation.

## LIVE ANIMALS IN THE CLASSROOM

One of the best ways to introduce children to environmental education is through animals. Young children have a natural affinity for animals and can be taught very early to be gentle with them and understand their needs. Purposeful activities that involve the children as naturalists and caretakers can instill values of the humane treatment of animals.



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Appropriate activities indoors include having an aquarium (for fish, frogs, or snails), watching birds at a window feeder, caring for an ant farm, and keeping certain animals as pets. Consider local regulations, facility or habitat available, cost of care, handling opportunities, cultural norms, and safety when choosing a pet. Use more than cages to create real habitats and homes for your classroom pets, and avoid releasing nonnative species into the wild. Be aware of and follow state and federal laws and regulations related to keeping, collecting, and releasing animals.

Health considerations for live animals:

- ◆ When live animals are present, the basic principles for optimal health of the animals and the children should always be adhered to diligently.
- ◆ Children and adults should wash hands after any interaction with a pet and between interactions with pets of different species.
- ◆ Pets should be observed by an adult when a child is interacting with them directly.

Caution: Public schools, child-care programs, and the Head Start program are all bound by specific regulations concerning live animals in early childhood classrooms. These have become more restrictive in recent years due to concerns about disease, allergens, and injury.

For more information on the responsible use of live animals in the classroom, please refer to the National Science Teachers Association's position statement: [www.nsta.org/about/positions/animals.aspx](http://www.nsta.org/about/positions/animals.aspx).



- A variety of sensory experiences—textures, sounds, tastes, smells, and sights are included in the child’s environment.
- Objects to encourage language skills, math skills, and artistic and creative expression are readily available.
- Tools to create products from nature—e.g., applesauce maker, spiles to collect sap, and child-appropriate construction tools (such as saws, hammers, and nails) are provided under careful supervision.
- Variations in seasonal and daily weather are carefully considered to ensure the child’s comfort and safety.
- The physical environment is varied and includes a spectrum of possibilities—ample shade, sunny spaces, windbreaks, open areas, small hiding places or refuges, gathering areas, areas for building, and areas for art and music and movement.
- Physical spaces used and their associated programs encourage a respect for nature and living things.
- “Sharing spaces” are included where children meet to get tools, supplies, look at bulletin boards, and so forth.
- Space is divided into clearly delineated areas for different kinds of activities, making sure that one activity does not interfere with another.

- Space is not visually overwhelming or over stimulating. Enough space is provided for contemplation and quiet personal time.

#### GUIDELINE 5.2—NATURAL COMPONENTS

The integration of natural components throughout places and spaces is essential if learning opportunities and development are to be maximized.

What to look for:

- In outdoor areas, use of asphalt is reduced; gardens, woods, natural pathways, and other natural elements are incorporated.
- Natural materials are used to create the environment and objects for play both indoors and outdoors.
- Abundant “loose parts” (sticks, leaves, seeds, logs, stones), earth materials (soil, sand, and rocks), and “rough ground” (uneven, rocky, challenging areas) are included in the outdoor environment.
- Safe and supervised water features are provided.
- The outdoor areas are landscaped so as to be inviting to appropriate wildlife, including birds and bugs.
- Plants are incorporated into the indoor environment.

#### SUGGESTIONS OF POSSIBLE NATURAL COMPONENTS THAT CAN BE USED INDOORS

The following list demonstrates just a few of the natural resources that can be used in early childhood environmental education programs:

- |                                     |                          |                         |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| ◆ Live plants (no poisonous plants) | ◆ Shells                 | ◆ Wood chunks or slices |
| ◆ Stones                            | ◆ Stumps                 | ◆ Herbs                 |
| ◆ Pinecones                         | ◆ Flowers                | ◆ Seeds                 |
| ◆ Sand                              | ◆ Sticks (twigs, bamboo) | ◆ Water                 |
| ◆ Rocks and minerals                |                          |                         |

These natural components can be used to create habitat; for sound- and music-making; for arts and crafts; in gross motor skill development (balancing, mimicking, maneuvering); wall and room décor and area dividers; and cooking components. They can also be used in manipulatives for math skills (grouping, sorting, ordering, classifying, counting), sensory experiences, construction and building, and scientific enquiry.

- Native plants are used in outdoor areas to help children know what their biological heritage is, to reduce maintenance, and to support native fauna such as butterflies and birds.
- Outdoor and indoor areas incorporate a wide variety of natural features and materials to promote interest and encourage interaction. Materials indoors are changed frequently and seasonal changes in the natural world are featured.

#### GUIDELINE 5.3—COMFORTABLE FOR BOTH CHILDREN AND ADULTS

Comfortable and inviting places and spaces are necessary for learning and development to occur.

Without a sense of comfort, it is very difficult for adults or children to benefit from an experience.

What to look for:

- Individual and group gathering areas are included.
- Sufficient seating for adults and children are provided.
- Places feel safe and are obviously accessible and inviting.
- Nooks and crannies are provided to encourage discovery and allow a sense of refuge.
- Shade and protection from wind and inclement weather are provided.

### CELEBRATING SUCCESS FOR YOUR OUTDOOR AREA

The Nature Explore Classroom Certification Program (Arbor Day Foundation and Dimensions Educational Research Foundation) is a national initiative that recognizes schools and community organizations that have made a commitment to provide high-quality outdoor classrooms and comprehensive programming to help young children explore and learn about the natural environment. To meet the requirements for the program, an organization must complete the following on an annual basis:

- 1) Well-designed outdoor space. Provide evidence that the “Ten Guiding Principles” from the Learning with Nature Idea Book (Arbor Day Foundation and Dimensions Educational Research Foundation, 2008) were used in the design of the outdoor classroom.
- 2) Staff development. Provide evidence that staff members receive annual professional development related to nature education.
- 3) Family involvement. Provide evidence that activities or materials designed to increase family awareness and involvement in nature education for young children are provided on an ongoing basis.

#### More Resources

- ♦ Arbor Day Foundation. Learning with Nature Idea Book: Creating Nurturing Outdoor Spaces for Children (Nebraska City, Nebraska, 2008)
- ♦ Curtis, D., and Carter, M. Designs for Living and Learning: Transforming Early Childhood Environments (Saint Paul, Minnesota: Redleaf Press, 2003)
- ♦ Greenman, J. Caring Spaces, Learning Places: Children’s Environments That Work (Child Care Information Exchange, 2008)
- ♦ Moore, R.C, Goltsman, S.M., & Iacofano, D.S. (1992), Play for All Guidelines. Berkeley, CA; MIG Communications.
- ♦ Keeler, R. Natural Playscapes: Creating Outdoor Play Environments for the Soul (Exchange Press, 2008)
- ♦ Pranis, E., and Gifford, A. Schoolyard Mosaics: Designing Gardens and Habitats (South Burlington, Vermont: National Gardening Association, 2002)



- Whenever possible, natural features for warming, cooling, shelter, and lighting are provided.
- Places are aesthetically pleasing.
- The play space is fitted to the local culture and climate.
- Areas are designed to encourage a sense of adventure and exploration.
- Easy access and storage of natural materials are provided.

#### GUIDELINE 5.4—MAINTENANCE AND USABILITY

Places and spaces must be well maintained to provide a safe, exemplary environment for the program that complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Maintenance should model best practices

and should ensure that the children are protected from harmful situations that can be prevented through appropriate maintenance.

What to look for:

- Means to care for the natural environment (tools, water, composting, accessible storage) are provided.
- Materials used in the construction are chosen with sustainability in mind.
- Appropriate fencing, signage, and paths through outdoor spaces are incorporated.
- Appropriate items are within reach of children; inappropriate items are not.
- Facilities meet applicable regulatory standards.
- Opportunities for the children to care for their space are provided.

#### GUIDELINE 5.5—HEALTH, SAFETY, AND RISK

In order to ensure the safety and health of the children, adequate planning, inspection, and vigilance are essential.

What to look for:

- Risk assessment has been completed that considers environmental, biological, chemical, and structural hazards.
- Established Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), health, and safety standards are followed and a risk management plan is in place.
- Emergency plans are established, shared, and understood.
- Parents understand the nature of the child's experiences and have realistic expectations of the outdoor activities.
- Staff is adequately trained; emergency and first aid supplies are available.
- Staff members each know their own disposition toward risk.
- Adults understand their responsibilities as supervisors, coaches, and role models.

**GUIDELINE 5.6—ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**  
Programs and facilities should model environmental sustainability and provide positive examples.

What to look for:

- Facility design and program implementation feature environmentally responsible practices such as energy and water conservation, solid waste management (e.g., recycling and composting), food production and preparation, and minimal use of disposable materials.
- Materials are chosen with sustainability in mind.
- Materials are chosen with the health of users in mind.
- Outdoor design contributes to indoor sustainability (e.g., access to solar heat).
- Pest management, when appropriate, uses nontoxic alternatives.
- Maintenance practices and supplies are used with sustainability and health in mind.



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- Where appropriate, rainwater is collected and stored for use in gardens.

### ADDRESSING SAFETY CONCERNS

It is beneficial to address fears parents may have about outdoor experiences openly, honestly, and with sensitivity. Explain that dirt, splinters, wet clothes, and scraped knees are all part of interacting with our natural world. Part of the innate thrill of meeting nature on its own terms is the sense of adventure that comes with jumping puddles, balancing on a log, and swinging from a tree branch. Communication of the growth, development, and pleasure derived from such experiences, along with identification of basic precautions being taken, will surely convince even the wariest parent that the benefits outweigh the concerns.

Some considerations:

- ◆ Evaluate height and slope of natural items and structures
- ◆ Test strength of potentially weight-bearing structures (tree limbs, rotted logs, slate outcrop)
- ◆ Encourage appropriate clothing, foot- and headwear (perhaps offering items from a classroom stash), including protective wear for sun and insects.
- ◆ Eliminate sharp drop-offs to water, cutting edges, and potential traps and choking hazards
- ◆ Restrict access to vehicular traffic
- ◆ Provide vigilant supervision without being overly intrusive
- ◆ Discuss simple precautions with kids regularly (such as leaving unknown animals alone and telling an adult)
- ◆ Build skills progressively, extending physical limitations over time
- ◆ Provide ongoing staff development in emergency preparedness



## A PARENTS' GUIDE TO NATURE PLAY

Nature play is no more dangerous than many other things that kids often do, such as running down stairs, playing soccer, riding in a car, or riding a tricycle! And while outdoor play does have risks, it also brings real developmental benefits.

You should always consider safety, of course, but don't obsess over tiny dangers. Although the most common cause of children's accidental death is auto accidents, you still drive your kid places. Do not let equally manageable dangers keep your kids away from nature play. Ultimately, your children must learn to judge risks, gauge their limits, and practice responsibility. Isn't it better for them to learn these skills by climbing backyard trees at age eight than to wait until they are sixteen and behind the wheel of a car?

— Finch, K. A Parent's Guide to Nature Play (Omaha, Nebraska: Green Hearts Institute for Nature in Childhood, 2009)

## MODELING BEHAVIOR

"Young children cannot grasp the concepts of limited natural resources or energy conservation; they can follow your example and learn behaviors that will reduce their environmental footprint and influence their decisions for years to come."

—American Forest Foundation, Project Learning Tree, 2010

Teachers and administrators can model environmentally friendly behavior and also make their intentions explicit to children. For example, a teacher may say to children, "I am going to use the other side of this paper because I don't want to waste it. Paper is made from trees, and if we use less paper, then fewer trees will be cut down and we won't have to buy as much paper." It is important to deliberately use words such as "waste," "too much," and "not enough" to help children think about how much glue, paper, paint, soap, water, and food they need.

Similarly, teachers can draw attention to their use of other resources: "I am going to turn off the light because we don't need it right now while the sun is shining in the windows. That way we don't use more electricity than we need." Older children can learn about how the electricity we use is generated from coal (depending on the region), and that if we use less electricity, less coal is burned and fewer trains have to haul the coal, resulting in less air pollution.

Vocabulary terms on green behavior: biodegradable, composting, organic, waste, reuse, recycle, conserve.

For more program ideas: Phil Boise. Go Green Rating Scale for Early Childhood Settings Handbook (Redleaf Press, 2007). Assessment checklist.



## KEY CHARACTERISTIC 6: EDUCATOR PREPARATION

GUIDELINE 6.1—FOUNDATIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

GUIDELINE 6.2—PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EDUCATOR

GUIDELINE 6.3—ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY

GUIDELINE 6.4—PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

GUIDELINE 6.5—FOSTERING LEARNING

GUIDELINE 6.6—ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

## Key Characteristic 6: Educator Preparation

**E**arly childhood environmental educators are able to plan and implement high-quality, developmentally appropriate programs for young children.

**GUIDELINE 6.1—FOUNDATIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION**  
Early childhood environmental educators combine their understanding of child development and developmentally appropriate practice with a basic understanding of the goals, theory, practice, and history of the field of environmental education. This knowledge provides a solid foundation on which educators can build their own practice.

What to look for:

- The fact that environmental education and early childhood education share many goals is understood. Educators should



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- recognize the broad view that environmental education takes, incorporating concepts such as systems, interdependence, and interactions among humans, other living organisms, the physical environment, and the built or designed environment
- understand that early childhood education and environmental education share an interdisciplinary perspective and integrate knowledge from across academic disciplines (e.g., common goals between environmental and peace education include the development of empathy, caring, and sense of belonging to a community)
- The facts that environmental education takes place in a variety of settings, and that sources of support, program requirements, and other factors vary from context to context are understood.

### GUIDELINE 6.2—PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EDUCATOR

Environmental education is a profession that maintains high standards for instruction and professional conduct.

What to look for:

- Environmental education that is appropriate, constructive, and relevant for young children is provided. Educators should
  - identify ways in which environmental education can enhance the development of a young learner
  - behave responsibly, respectfully, and reasonably during instruction
  - respect the process of inquiry and the application of environmental investigations in instruction
- The need for educators to be active learners in their profession is understood. They should
  - identify and practice ways of continually updating information about the environment and early childhood pedagogy, current research, environmental education materials, and instructional methods



- reflect on and learn from personal practice as an early childhood environmental educator, both individually and with other professionals and colleagues
- seek opportunities to learn essential content and skills in real-world environmental settings or contexts, especially within the communities and ecosystems in which they live and teach

#### GUIDELINE 6.3—ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY

Early childhood environmental educators possess the understandings, skills, and attitudes associated with environmental literacy and teaching.

What to look for:

- Mastery in questioning, analysis, and interpretation skills.
- Understanding of environmental processes and systems.
- Possession of skills for addressing environmental concerns.
- Possession of a high degree of personal and civic responsibility.

#### GUIDELINE 6.4—PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Educators provide interdisciplinary, investigative learning opportunities that are central to environmental education and developmentally appropriate for young children.

What to look for:

- A range of instructional methods to meet the needs of different learners are employed. Educators should
  - identify and use methods for presenting the environment or environmental concerns in appropriate and engaging ways for learners of different ages, backgrounds, levels of knowledge, and developmental abilities
  - select environmental education materials and strategies that are developmentally appropriate
  - recognize and acknowledge the validity of varying cultural perspectives present in a group of learners; tailor instructional approaches to respond to these perspectives and use them as an educational resource

### SHARING

Help children to look more closely, listen more carefully, and understand the natural world in rich and varied ways by providing opportunities for children to marvel in the beauty of nature. This will work best if the educator appreciates the beauty of nature and shares with children the sparkling patterns of frost on the grass, the smell of rain, the cooing of pigeons, the smoothness or roughness of stones, or the intricacy of a grasshopper's body.



- use a variety of teaching methods and strategies appropriate for the environmental education content and context
- use culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate teaching methods appropriate for the learner and goals of the program
- Effective instruction is planned. Educators should
  - plan age-appropriate environmental education instruction and programs that meet specific instructional goals
  - produce a plan for environmental education instruction that enhances coordination or integration across disciplines or helps meet specific goals of environmental education and contributes to the development of the child
- A range of environmental education materials and resources are used. Educators should
  - understand ways in which the community can be a resource for early childhood environmental education, identifying local businesses, service organizations, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and other resources that may participate in and support instructional programs
  - identify and use sources of information about instructional materials and other resources including training offered by national, state, and local environmental education and early childhood programs and professional organizations
  - use a variety of tools for environmental observation, measurement, and monitoring (e.g., magnifying glasses, microscopes, trowels, tweezers) and instruct learners in their safe and proper use
  - understand the importance of a safe and conducive learning environment both indoors and outside
  - identify and use diverse settings for early childhood environmental education, appropriate to different subject matter and available resources. These may include the schoolyard, laboratory, field settings, community settings, museums, zoos, demonstration sites, or libraries
  - plan and implement instruction that first links content to the children's immediate surroundings and experience, then expands learners' horizons as appropriate to larger environmental concerns and contexts

## CURIOSITY AND EXPLORATION

Children are naturally curious and enjoy exploring and playing. Play and exploration promote development of the whole child—physical, cognitive, social, and emotional. Planning for children is most effective when activities are open-ended, multimodal, multisensory, and novel:

**Open-ended:** An experience or activity should have many possible “outcomes”—what children create and learn—and “processes”—how children approach an activity or project.

**Multimodal:** Activities provide opportunities for children to interact with the world in different ways—motor, kinesthetic, musical, verbal, or visual-spatial, for example.

**Multisensory:** Activities that stimulate as many senses as possible—sight, sound, smell, touch, and, when appropriate, taste—are more meaningful for children (and all learners), and promote neurological connections in multiple areas of the brain. More interconnectivity promotes lasting memories and knowledge that is linked to the learners' own lives.

**Novel:** Activities that defy “reason”—for example, asking children to paint under their tables with barks or brush, or providing a magnifying lens to examine leaves taped under the table evokes curiosity that in turn stimulate neural connections.



#### GUIDELINE 6.5—FOSTERING LEARNING

Early childhood environmental educators create a climate in which children are motivated to learn about and explore the environment.

What to look for:

- Opportunities for children to have firsthand experiences exploring the world around them are incorporated.
  - Opportunities are provided for children to share their views and ideas with peers and adults; instructors actively and consistently listen to what children say.
  - Learning by fostering openness and collaboration among children and creating an inclusive learning environment is maximized.
  - Diverse cultures, races, genders, social groups, ages, and perspectives are included with respect, equity, and an acknowledgment of the value of such diversity.
- Diverse backgrounds and perspectives are used as instructional resources.
    - Proper planning is augmented with flexibility, taking advantage of instructional opportunities; modification of instructional plans and approaches, when appropriate, to take advantage of unexpected opportunities (for example, school or community events or items in the news), learner questions and interests, and teachable moments
    - Blend a variety of instructional methods and activities to meet instructional objectives (for example, questioning, small groups, projects, discussion). Make smooth transitions from one to another
    - Work collaboratively with other instructors, adapting instructional approaches as needed to blend or complement instructional styles and to meet shared environmental education goals

#### GUIDELINE 6.6—ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Environmental educators possess the knowledge and skills to assess learner progress and evaluate the effectiveness of their own programs. Through these assessment activities, educators can identify children who may need additional assistance as well as evaluate progress toward meeting goals.

What to look for:

- The importance of tying assessment to learning is understood, and, when appropriate, educators should

#### STRUCTURING ACTIVITIES

Activities should be planned with a clear beginning, middle, and end. At the beginning of the activity, briefly tell children what the sequence of the activity will be, including transitions: "Teacher Jenny will tell you when it is time for your group to put on your coats. We are going to take our nature notebooks and go see how many animals we can find living in the trees on the playground. When you hear me sing the cleanup song, it will be time to line up by the door. Then we are going to come to the circle and share with our friends what we found." The beginning of the activity is also a time to generate enthusiasm: "I wonder what kind of animals might live in the trees on our playground? Does anyone have any ideas about that?"



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### GAINING CONFIDENCE

A teacher was fairly new to Minnesota and unsure about traveling onto frozen ponds, especially with children. After training—finding out how to determine ice depth, strength, and safety—she ventured on cautiously. She began to grow comfortable and explore with children more readily and was able to help assure children of their own safety. Now, along with her students, she eagerly chops with an ice auger to explore and inspire wonder.

- identify national, state, and local standards and assess environmental education based on these standards
- develop and use a variety of strategies for assessing learning outcomes that reflect both subject area standards and environmental education goals and objectives (e.g., rubrics, checklists, journals)

- describe and use means for helping children set their own expectations for achievement; discuss the importance of these abilities in light of environmental education's emphasis on learner-centered education and lifelong learning
- A variety of education outcomes, including attitudes, beliefs, actions, and engagement in learning are assessed as well as knowledge about the environment.
- Instructional experiences and assessments are employed competently to improve future instruction. Educators should
  - organize, interpret, and use the results of differing kinds of assessment to benefit those involved and help modify and improve future instruction
  - demonstrate a willingness and ability to collect additional information from and about

### FLEXIBLE ASSESSMENT

Young children learn and display their learning in a variety of ways. Assessment strategies should be flexible, meet identified objectives, and be designed with the knowledge that learning is not a simple input-output process. Young children process information uniquely and not always visibly. The impact of classroom experiences may show up at home, not necessarily at school.

children to help modify and improve future instruction

- seek out opportunities to reflect, individually and with colleagues, on their own instructional practices and the broader practice of environmental education within the field
- keep a journal or a record of what worked and what didn't
- Developmentally appropriate assessment is used. Use of developmentally appropriate assessment by educators may include the following:
  - Continuous observation of children
  - Listening to the children's comments and asking them clarifying questions as they work
  - Keeping anecdotal records, post-its, or notebooks
  - Inviting the children to represent their knowledge through a drawing, story, dance, dictated journal entry, or verbal explanation
  - Assembling examples of the child's work in a portfolio
  - Using group assessments such as a mural, play, dance, or construction project
  - Constructing a know-wonder-learn (KWL) chart that gathers the children's initial knowledge about a topic, their wonderings, and (as the chart is developed) the discussions of the children as they accumulate their new knowledge
- Tracking the books used, the engagement of the children in an activity, or how knowledge shows up in their play.
  - Using language-experience stories accompanied by photographs to record the group's learning





## Appendix A

### Acronyms Used in the Guidelines

- ACEI: Association for Childhood Education International
- ADA: Americans with Disabilities Act
- DAP: Developmentally Appropriate Practices
- EETAP: Environmental Education and Training Partnership
- NAAEE: The North American Association for Environmental Education
- NAESP: National Association of Elementary School Principals
- NAEYC: National Association for the Education of Young Children
- ND: No Date give for a citation
- NPEEE: National Project for Excellence in Environmental Education
- USEPA: United States Environmental Protection Agency

## Appendix B

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## Appendix D

### Overview of Selected Theorists Important to Early Childhood Education

In early childhood education, researchers and theorists such as Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky, Montessori, Erikson, Gardner, Steiner, and the founders of the Reggio Emilia schools in Italy have contributed valuable insight into how young children learn.

- John Dewey (1938) theorized that experiential learning engaged the physical, emotional, and mental aptitudes of students and created opportunities for a deeper understanding. “I assume that amid all uncertainties there is one permanent frame of reference: namely, the organic connection between education and personal experience” (Dewey, 1938, p. 25). In *Experiential Learning*, David Kolb describes learning as a four-step process (Kolb, 1984). He identifies the steps as (1) watching and (2) thinking (mind), (3) feeling (emotion), and (4) doing (muscle). He draws primarily on the works of Dewey (who emphasized the need for learning to be grounded in experience), Lewin (1935) (who stressed the importance of a people being active in learning), and Jean Piaget (who described intelligence as the result of the interaction of the person and the environment).
- Jean Piaget established the theory of Constructivism, one of the most widely used educational theories currently. He understood that children construct knowledge by exploring, manipulating objects, and processing thoughts. It has been widely reported that he said, “Every time we teach a child something, we keep him from inventing it himself . . . that which we allow him to discover himself will remain with him.”
- Lev Vygotsky’s (1987) social-cultural theory emphasizes the important role of social interaction in supporting children’s cognitive development. Vygotsky’s concepts of the “zone of proximal development,” referring to what a child can do with support of an adult or more competent peer, but not yet alone, and “scaffolding,” referring to attuned support that helps a child competently do what they cannot yet do alone, underscore the importance of observing children closely in order to understand children’s current abilities and needs and using those observations to plan curriculum.
- Maria Montessori (Getman, 1987. Montessori, 1982, Wortham, 1998) worked with young children with severe disabilities and then with those in poverty leading to well developed theories about how children learn in the first five years of life. Montessori observed that young children learn through their senses and through movement and exploration, and therefore “prepared environments” indoors and outdoors can promote purposeful learning. Montessori emphasized the importance of “authentic work,” in which children are given the opportunity to use real tools that are child sized and the opportunity to take responsibility and make contributions to others through activities such as gardening and cooking. Therefore, teachers prepare and carefully maintain the preschool environment, facilitate the child’s interactions with materials and with others, and observe each child’s work and development.
- Erik Erikson (1950) articulated stages of social-emotional development that have been hugely influential in early childhood practice: Basic trust (v. mistrust) for infants, Autonomy (v. shame) for toddlers, Initiative (v. guilt) for preschoolers, and Industry (v. inferiority) for school-age children. While stage theory, which suggests advancement is predicted on completing previous stages, is subject to discussion, these overall descriptions resonate with many observations by others, including cross-culturally.
- Howard Gardner is the architect of multiple Intelligence theory. He theorized that people have at least eight different intelligences and every person has capabilities in each area but some areas are stronger than others are. The following are the eight intelligences: Logical-mathematical (numbers, reasoning), Linguistic (reading, writing, talking), Bodily-kinesthetic (moving, physical activity), Musical (songs, pat-

terns, sound), Interpersonal (understanding other people and social interactions), Intrapersonal (self-knowledge), Spatial (drawing, mapping), and Naturalist (understanding of the physical world). Teachers have found his description useful in designing curriculum to meet all children.

- Rudolph Steiner, like Piaget, Montessori, and Vygotsky, developed his theories in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but those ideas have received wide currency only in the last half of the century. Indeed, Waldorf Schools, named for the founding school, are one of the fastest growing schools in the world. Waldorf schools emphasize natural materials and sensitivity to children's imaginations and fantasy (Nielsen 2004).
- The Reggio Emilia approach to education is committed to the creation of conditions for learning that will enhance and facilitate children's construction of "his or her own powers of thinking through the synthesis of all the expressive, communicative, and cognitive languages" (Edwards, Forman, and Gandini 1993). In Reggio Emilia schools, the environment is considered the "third teacher." Teachers carefully organize space for small and large group projects both indoors and outdoors. Teachers provide intimate workspaces for individual and small groups. Documentation of children's work is used to assess children's learning and plan subsequent learning experiences. Documentation is displayed in ways that children and adults can appreciate and enjoy.

## Appendix E

### Head Start—A Checklist for Early Childhood Curriculum

#### DOES THE CURRICULUM . . . ?

1. Promote interactive learning and encourage the child's construction of knowledge
2. Help children achieve social, emotional, linguistic, physical, and cognitive goals
3. Encourage development of positive feelings and dispositions toward learning while leading to acquisition of knowledge and skills
4. Have expectations that are realistic and attainable at this time
5. Include children with disabilities in the curriculum
6. Build and elaborate on children's current knowledge and abilities
7. Lead to conceptual understanding by helping children construct their own understanding in meaningful contexts
8. Facilitate concept learning and skills development in an integrated and natural way
9. Challenge children with disabilities to attain goals beyond those specified in the individual education plans or individualized family service plan
10. Permit flexibility for children and teachers
11. Encourage active learning and frequently allow children to make meaningful choices
12. Foster children's exploration and inquiry, rather than focusing on "right" answers or "right" ways to complete a task
13. Promote the development of higher-order abilities, such as thinking, reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making
14. Promote and encourage social interaction among children and adults
15. Respect children's psychological needs for activity, sensory stimulation, fresh air, rest, and nourishment
16. Promote feelings of safety, security, and belonging
17. Provide experiences that promote feelings of success, competence, and enjoyment of learning
18. Promote positive relationships with families

#### IS IT . . . ?

- Based on sound child development principles of how children grow and learn and grounded in the Head Start program performance standards?
- Meaningful for these children? Is it relevant to the children's lives? Can it be made more relevant by linking it to personal experiences the children have had or can have easily?
- Sensitive to and respectful of cultural and linguistic diversity? Does the curriculum expect, allow, and appreciate individual differences?

Adapted from NAEYC

"Checklist for Early Childhood Curriculum." Curriculum. Head Start Bulletin # 67. HHS/ACF/ACYF/HSB. 2001. English retrieved from [http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/ecdh/eecd/Curriculum/Definition%20and%20Requirements/edudev\\_art\\_00527\\_030907.html](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/ecdh/eecd/Curriculum/Definition%20and%20Requirements/edudev_art_00527_030907.html) on July 12, 2010.

## Appendix F

### Child Development and the Role Educators Play

	Infant, toddler	Preschool	Primary
Child's Development	Sensory development, discovery in their environment, development of motor skills	Sensory development, observation, questioning, discovery in their environment, independent but may work with others, development of motor skills	Observation, questioning, discovery in their environment and community, cooperative learning and group work, development of motor skills
Role of Educator	Appreciate and enjoy the child, contribute to vocabulary development, sensory activities, engage children with nature, model positive environmental behavior, make learning relevant, encouraging creativity (song, dance, role play)	Appreciate and enjoy the child, contribute to vocabulary development, direct child's questioning, sensory activities, facilitate instruction, clarify content, engage children with nature, model positive environmental behavior, make learning relevant, encourage creativity (song, dance, role play)	Appreciate and enjoy the child, contribute to vocabulary development, facilitate child's questioning, facilitate instruction, clarify content, engage children with nature and their environment, model positive environmental behavior, make learning relevant, encourage creativity (song, dance, role play)



[illegible]



natural start  
alliance

[illegible]



For more than four decades, the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) has been a leader in promoting excellence in environmental education throughout North America. With members in more than 30 countries, and affiliations with more than 50 state and provincial environmental education organizations, NAAEE's influence stretches across North America and around the world. Our mission is to bring the brightest minds together to advance environmental literacy and civic engagement through the power of education.

NAAEE supports the field with a variety of programs and services, including:

**Annual Conference and Research Symposium**—NAAEE has convened an annual conference for environmental education professionals since 1972. The conference is the largest national gathering of environmental education professionals in North America and promotes innovation in the field, networking, new tools and resources, and dissemination of research and best practices.

**Resources**—NAAEE provides its members and supporters with high-quality professional resources including books, resource guides, essays, peer-reviewed research, best practices, research reviews, job listings, grant opportunities, news across the field, and more.

**Professional Development**—NAAEE offers unique services in professional development and support. Through online networking and professional learning, training seminars, strategic convening of environmental education leaders, and support of certification programs, NAAEE promotes leadership development and builds the capacity of its members and affiliates.

**Advocacy**—NAAEE is a non-partisan organization that plays a leadership role in raising the profile of environmental education at an international level. NAAEE works with partners to advocate for environmental education with agencies, organizations, foundations, and others to increase funding and support for the field.

**Inspiring Innovation**—NAAEE is committed to bringing new voices, ideas, and innovation to the field and broadening the reach and impact of environmental education.

**naturalstart**  
alliance

The Natural Start Alliance is NAAEE's project to advance early childhood environmental education. Natural Start is a network of educators, parents, and organizations that connect young children to nature and the

environment through education. Natural Start supports early childhood environmental education by promoting networking, professional development, research, and advocacy.

[naaee.org](http://naaee.org)

[naturalstart.org](http://naturalstart.org)

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March 2019

## The National Project for Excellence in Environmental Education

The North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) launched the National Project for Excellence in Environmental Education in 1993 to help educators develop and deliver high-quality education programming. The project works to create a more environmentally literate citizenry with the knowledge, skills, and inclinations to make informed choices and exercise the rights and responsibilities of members of a community. To date, NAAEE has published five sets of guidelines that promote the use of balanced, scientifically accurate, and comprehensive environmental education materials and programs that advance environmental literacy and civic engagement.

### Publications

Publications created by the National Project for Excellence in Environmental Education include:

- **Environmental Education Materials: Guidelines for Excellence** (4th edition, 2009). A set of recommendations for developing and selecting environmental education materials.
- **Excellence in Environmental Education: Guidelines for Learning (K-12)** (4th edition, 2010). A comprehensive framework for environmental education, demonstrating environmental education's alignment with national academic standards.
- **Excellence in Environmental Education: Guidelines for Learning (K-12) Executive Summary & Self Assessment Tool** (4th edition, 2010). An easy-to-use outline listing the guidelines and a set of checklists for analyzing educational activities.
- **Guidelines for the Preparation and Professional Development of Environmental Educators** (3rd edition, 2010). A set of competencies for educators preparing to teach environmental education in a variety of job settings.
- **Nonformal Environmental Education Programs: Guidelines for Excellence** (2nd edition, 2009). A set of recommendations to be used in the development of comprehensive environmental education programs or to trigger improvements in existing ones.
- **Early Childhood Environmental Education Programs: Guidelines for Excellence** (2010). A set of recommendations to be used in the development of comprehensive early childhood environmental education programs or to trigger improvements in existing ones.

Hard copies and free downloadable pdfs of the Environmental Education Guidelines publications can be ordered from NAAEE at [www.naaee.org/our-work/programs/guidelines-excellence](http://www.naaee.org/our-work/programs/guidelines-excellence).



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